LETTERS

ON THE

WORKS AND CHARACTER

OF

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

A Letter from the Counteſs Alexandre de Vaſſy to the Baroneſs de Stael, with the Baroneſs's Anſwer, and an Account of the laſt Moments of Rouſſeau.

BY

Mademoiſelle NECKER, Baroneſs de STAEL.

Tranſlated from the FRENCH.

Vous qui de ſes ecrits ſavez gouter les charmes,
Vous tous, qui lui devez des leçons et des larmes,
Pour prix de ces leçons et de ſes pleurs ſi doux,
Cœurs ſenſibles venez : je le confie à vous.

L'Abbé de Lille.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE ſeen no eulogium of Rouſſeau, and have long felt the deſire of expreſſing my admiration of his Writings. I could have wiſhed any other perſon had deſcribed what I have felt, but I found ſome pleaſure in calling to my recollection the impreſſion of my enthuſiaſm. I thought that if men of genius were to be judged by none but ſuperior minds, they ought to accept every tribute of acknowledgment. Works profeſſedly written for the benefit of mankind place their authors upon a level with men to whoſe fame their actions have given immortality, and they who are not their cotemporaries may be impatient to do juſtice to their memory, and preſent at their tombs the tokens of that homage which

which the conſcioufneſs even of their own weakneſs ought not to prevent them from offering.

It is probable that they who may indulgently deign to predict in me ſome talents, will be the firſt to reproach me with having haſtily undertaken to treat a ſubject, to which my abilities, even when matured by time, will never be equal. But who knows whether time may not deprive us of more than we receive from it? Or who dares to pronounce on the progreſs of his own underſtanding? How is it poſſible to poſtpone to a diſtant and uncertain day the declaration of a ſentiment by which we are ſtrongly impreſſed? Time certainly deſtroys all illuſions; but it ſometimes happens, that truth itſelf is a ſufferer by it, and the ravages of its deſtructive hand are not always confined to error. Beſides, is it not in our juvenile years that we owe the greateſt acknowledgments to Rouſſeau? he who knew how to make a paſſion of virtue, who conſecrated eloquence to morality, and, glowing with enthuſiaſm, adopted the qualities and defects of youth to render himſelf its maſter and its guide.

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LETTERS

ON THE

WORKS AND CHARACTER

OF

J. J. ROUSSEAU.

LETTER I.

Of the Style of Rouſſeau, and of his firſt Diſcourſes on the Sciences, the Inequality of Conditions, and the pernicious Tendency of Theatres.

ROUSSEAU was forty years of age when he compoſed his firſt work. He could not devote himſelf to ſtudy until his heart and mind were calm;

and whilſt moſt men ſtand in need of the firſt fire of youth to ſupply the want of a real warmth of imagination, the mind of Rouſſeau was agitated by a flame to which it was long a prey, without receiving its light: it was under the ſucceſſive dominion of innumerable ideas, and led away by each in its turn, incapable of following any one in particular. Rouſſeau was too much attracted by exterior objects to turn his attention within: his feelings were too ſtrong to permit him to think, and he knew not how to live and reflect at the ſame time. He therefore devoted himſelf to meditation as ſoon as the events of life began to have leſs empire over him, and when, undiſturbed by any object of paſſion, he could confine his mind to abſtracted ideas, by which alone it was then entirely enflamed. He wrote not rapidly, nor with much facility; but this was becauſe the ſame time and efforts were neceſſary to him to chooſe one thought from among a great

number, as men of mediocrity employ in endeavouring to create them. His ſentiments, in fact, are ſo profound, and his ideas ſo vaſt, that his ſlow and majeſtic progreſs is ſuch as it might have been wiſhed. Order produced from chaos, and the creation of the world, preſent the idea of a work the conſequence of a long ſeries of ages, yet the power of the Creator does not appear leſs awful.

The firſt ſubject treated by Rouſſeau was the queſtion concerning the utility of the Arts and Sciences. The opinion he maintained is certainly paradoxical; but it is in perfect conformity with his practical ideas; and all the works he has ſince given, tend in ſome meaſure to develope a ſyſtem of which his diſcourſe was the firſt germ. All his writings bear the marks of a paſſion for nature, and a hatred for every thing added to it by men: and for the purpoſe of explaining to himſelf the mixture of good and evil, he ſeems to have diſtri-

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buted it in this manner. He wiſhed to bring men back to a kind of ſtate, of which nothing but the golden age of fable gives an idea, equally removed from the inconveniences of ſavage life and the vices of civilization. The project was undoubtedly a chimera; but alchymiſts, in ſeeking for the philoſopher's ſtone, have made very uſeful diſcoveries. Rouſſeau, in the ſame manner, making ſtrong efforts to acquire a knowledge of perfect felicity, found in his progreſs ſeveral important truths. While conſidering the queſtion on the utility of Arts and Sciences, he perhaps did not ſufficiently examine every ſide of the ſubject of which he treated, and may poſſibly have too frequently connected the Arts with the Sciences, although their effects be entirely different from each other. When ſpeaking of the decline of empires, the natural conſequence of political revolutions, he may have erred in looking upon the progreſs of Science as one cauſe, whilſt it was

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nothing more than a cotemporary event: nor has he in his diſcourſe ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed the happineſs of men from the proſperity of empires; for were it true that the thirſt after knowledge abated the paſſion for arms, in a warlike people, the happineſs of mankind would thence have received no injury. Finally, before he had decided the queſtion, it would perhaps have been better to have balanced the inconveniences and advantages of both ſides, which is the only method of arriving at truth. Moral ideas are never ſufficiently preciſe not to give an opening to controverſy; good and evil are every where to be met with: and he who neglects to make uſe of the faculty, ſo to ſpeak, of adding and comparing both one and the other, muſt either be deceived, or remain in a ſtate of uncertainty. It belongs to reaſon rather than to eloquence to conciliate contrary opinions: the mind diſplays a greater power when it can be

withheld and led from one idea to another, but it ſeems to me the ſoul poſſeſſes not all its force except when abandoned to its whole energy; and I know but one man who has had the addreſs to join warmth to moderation, to ſupport with eloquence opinions equally diſtant from every extreme, and to gain over, in favour of reaſon, that paſſion, which until then had never been inſpired but for ſyſtems.

The ſecond diſcourſe of Rouſſeau treats of the origin of the inequality of conditions, and is perhaps that in which he has introduced the greateſt number of ideas. It is a great effort of genius thus to go back to the ſimple combinations of natural inſtinct. Men of ordinary underſtandings conceive not that which is either above or beneath them; they remain fixed to their horizon. Every page of this diſcourſe proves how much Rouſſeau regretted a ſavage life. He had his particular kind of miſanthropy: it was not men, but their inſtitutions, he hated.

hated. He wiſhed to prove that every thing was good when it came from the hands of the Creator; but he perhaps ſhould have confeſſed that the ardent deſire of knowledge was alſo a natural ſentiment, a gift from Heaven, like all the other faculties of man; the means of happineſs when exerciſed, but thoſe equally of torment when condemned to inaction; and after knowing, feeling, and experiencing the effects of every thing, he vainly exclaims: "Go no farther; I "am on my return, and have ſeen no-"thing worth the trouble of the journey." Every man wiſhes to be undeceived in his turn, and deſires have never yet been calmed by the experience of others. It is remarkable that one of the moſt ſuſceptible men, and the moſt diſtinguiſhed by his genius and knowledge, ſhould have attempted to reduce the human heart and mind to a ſtate almoſt reſembling ſtupidity. But he had felt more than moſt others, all the pain of

which theſe advantages, carried to exceſs, might be the cauſe. It is perhaps at the expence of happineſs that the extraordinary ſucceſs due to ſublime talents is obtained. Nature, exhauſted by theſe magnificent preſents, often refuſes to great men the qualities which might render them happy. How cruel is it then to grant with ſo much difficulty, or ſo enviouſly to deny them that glory, which is perhaps the only enjoyment they are capable of taſting!

With what admirable ingenuity does Rouſſeau follow the progreſs of the ideas of men! What admiration does he inſpire of the firſt conceptions of the human mind, and what aſtoniſhment at the concourſe of circumſtances by which it may be induced to continue its reſearches! How exquiſitely does he trace the progreſs of thought, compoſe its hiſtory, and exhibit an effort of intellectual imagination, of abſtract creation, ſuperior to all the inventions of events and images of which

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we have received an idea from the poets! In the midſt of all the extravagance of his ſyſtems, what a command has he of the means of inſpiring ſentiments of horror for vice, and of love for virtue. It is true, his poſitive ideas, like thoſe of Monteſquieu, point not out at the ſame time the evil and the remedy, the end and the means; he takes not upon himſelf to ſhew the manner of executing his thought; but he acts upon the mind, and thus aſcends nearer the firſt ſource. Much has been ſaid in favour of the perfection of Rouſſeau's ſtyle. I know not if this be preciſely the eulogium due to it; perfection ſeems more to conſiſt in the abſence of defects than in the exiſtence of great beauties; in meaſure than in diffuſeneſs; in that which an author always is, than in that which he ſometimes ſhews himſelf to be; in a word, perfection gives an idea of proportion rather than of grandeur. But Rouſſeau is alternately elevated and depreſſed; he

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is ſometimes below, and at others, even above perfection. He collects all his warmth to a center, and, to blaze forth, unites all the rays whence light only would have proceeded, had they remained ſeparate. If man has but a certain proportion of mental vigour, let him exert it all at once; and exhauſt himſelf if it be neceſſary; let him ſuffer me to deſcend provided he has once elevated me to the ſkies. Nevertheleſs Rouſſeau joining to warmth and genius what is preciſely called wit, that faculty of ſeizing diſtant and ſubtle affinities, which, without extending the boundary of thought, marks out new tracts in the regions through which it has already paſt, and without giving rapidity to ſtyle, yet animates it by contraſts and oppoſition; he often fills up by ingenious thoughts the intervals of his eloquence, and thus by not ſuffering the intereſt of the reader to diminiſh, conſtantly keeps hold of his attention. His ſtyle receives a perfect clearneſs

clearneſs from a great propriety in the choice of terms, and a remarkable ſimplicity of grammatical conſtruction: his thought is faithfully rendered by his expreſſion, but the charm of this is due to his mind. M. de Buffon gives a colouring to his ſtyle by imagination, Rouſſeau animates his by his character: the former chooſes his expreſſions, but theſe eſcape from the latter. The eloquence of M. de Buffon can belong to none but men of genius: paſſion alone may be a means of obtaining that of Rouſſeau. But what greater eulogium can be given him than that of finding in moſt of the ſubjects upon which he has written, the warmth with which the tranſports of love, hatred, or other paſſions, may once in life inſpire thoſe by whom they are felt? His ſtyle is not always harmonious; but in the paſſages inſpired by his ſoul, though there exiſts not the imitative harmony of the poets, nor the ſucceſſion of ſonorous words which would be pleaſing to thoſe

even by whom their meaning were not underſtood; yet is there, if I may be permitted the expreſſion, a kind of natural harmony, the accent of paſſion, and forming with it a perfect concord, like a well compoſed air with the words it expreſſes. He is blameable in ſometimes having made uſe of expreſſions which a better taſte would have rejected; but by the affectation with which he employs them, it appears that he is well aware of the criticiſm to which they are expoſed. He ſeems to take a pride in forcing his readers to approve them; and, perhaps from a kind of republican ſpirit, he will not acknowledge the exiſtence of low or elevated terms, of rank, even among words; but if he hazards ſome expreſſions which a juſtneſs of taſte would have rejected, he reconciles this to himſelf by whole paſſages perfect in every reſpect. He who rejects rules, after once having confined himſelf to them, gives a ſufficient proof that he does not condemn them from

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an incapacity to follow what they preſcribe.

The Diſcourſe of Rouſſeau which has moſt ſtruck me, is that againſt the eſtabliſhment of public ſpectacles at Geneva. There is in it an aſtoniſhing union of the means of perſuaſion, of logic and eloquence, of paſſion and reaſon. The Author never appeared with ſo much dignity; the love of his country, the enthuſiaſm of liberty, and an attachment to morality, guide and animate his thought. The cauſe he ſupports, eſpecially when applied to Geneva, is perfectly juſt; all the wit he ſometimes employs to maintain a paradox, he brings forward in this work in aid of truth; not one of his efforts is in vain, none of the impulſions he gives miſs the object at which they are aimed. He has all the ideas to which his ſubject can give birth, with all the elevation and warmth it ought to excite. It is in this work he eſtabliſhes his opinion upon the advan-

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tages which muſt reſult to men and women by not frequently ſeeing each other in ſociety; a cuſtom undoubtedly to be preferred in a republic. Patriotiſm excites men ſo powerfully, as to render them indifferent even concerning that which we call glory; but in countries where the power of opinion only is unaffected by that of the ſovereign, the ſuffrage and applauſe of women becomes an additional motive of emulation, the influence of which it is of importance to preſerve. In republics, it is neceſſary men ſhould preſerve even their defects; their auſterity and roughneſs fortify in them the paſſion for liberty. But the ſame defects in an abſolute government would make tyrants of thoſe only in whom the exerciſe of ſome power is veſted. I will likewiſe venture to aſſert, that in a monarchy women conſpicuouſly preſerve a ſtronger ſentiment of independence than men; the form of government does not reach them; their ſlavery, which is always

ways domeſtic, is much the ſame in every country: their nature therefore is not degraded even in deſpotic ſtates; but men born to enjoy civil liberty, once deprived of it, feel they are debaſed, and then ſink beneath themſelves. Although Rouſſeau has endeavoured to prevent women from interfering with public affairs, and acting a brilliant part in the theatre of politics; yet in ſpeaking of them how much has he done it to their ſatisfaction! If he wiſhed to deprive them of ſome rights foreign to their ſex, how has he for ever reſtored to them all thoſe to which it has a claim! and in attempting to diminiſh their influence over the deliberations of men, how ſacredly has he eſtabliſhed the empire they have over their happineſs! In aiding them to deſcend from an uſurped throne he has firmly ſeated them upon that to which they were deſtined by nature; and although he be full of indignation againſt them when they endeavour to reſemble

ſemble men, yet when they come before him with all the charms, weakneſſes, virtues, and errors of their ſex, his reſpect for their perſons amounts almoſt to adoration. To conclude, he admits the paſſion of love: his pardon is granted. What ſignifies it to women, that his reaſon diſputes with them the empire, when his heart is devotedly theirs; or of what importance is it to thoſe even whom nature has endowed with tenderneſs, that they ſhould be deprived of the falſe honour of governing him whom they love? Theſe, becauſe they adore him, prefer feeling his ſuperiority, and admiring it; thinking him far ſuperior to themſelves and depending upon him, they voluntarily ſubmit to his authority, lay every thing at his feet, themſelves even giving the example, and wiſh for no other return than that of the heart, of which, in loving, they have become worthy. However, the only wrong with which, in the name of my ſex, I can reproach Rouſſeau,

is his having advanced, in a note annexed to his letter on public ſpectacles, that women are incapable of works which require to be written with energy or paſſion. Let him, if he pleaſes, refuſe women thoſe rare literary talents, which, far from gaining them the affections of men, make them their competitors; and that exceſſive vigour of mind, that profound faculty of attention, with which great geniuſes are endowed. Their weak organs are not formed for theſe, and their heart, too frequently affected by their ſentiments or misfortune, conſtantly influences their mode of thinking, and does not ſuffer them to fix on objects foreign to their reigning idea. But let him not accuſe them of being unable to write with warmth or incapable of deſcribing love. It is by the heart only that they are diſtinguiſhed; this gives impulſion to their minds, and aids them in finding ſome delight in a deſtiny of which ſentiments are the

only events, and affection the ſole intereſt; it is this which unites them to the fate of him they love, and creates them a happineſs of which the only ſource is the felicity of the objects of their tenderneſs. Finally, it is the heart which ſerves them inſtead of inſtruction and experience, and renders them worthy of feeling that of which they are incapable of judging. Sappho only among women, ſays Rouſſeau, knew how to ſpeak of love. Although they might bluſh to make uſe of her warmth of expreſſion, the reign of a wild delirium, rather than a profound paſſion, they would at leaſt be able to expreſs what they feel; and this ſublime ſorrow, that melancholy grief, thoſe all-powerful ſentiments which enable them to live and die, would perhaps produce more deep emotions in the heart of the reader than all the tranſports to which the exalted imaginations of poets and lovers give birth.

LETTER

LETTER II.

OF ELOISA.

THE merit and brilliancy of the different diſcourſes of which I have ſpoken in my preceding letter conſiſt in profoundneſs of thought, and more particularly in an energetic ſtyle; but they contain likewiſe certain traits of ſenſibility which previouſly characteriſe the author of Eloiſa. I moſt willingly impoſe upon myſelf the agreeable taſk of retracing the effect this work had upon me; but I ſhall particularly endeavour to guard againſt an enthuſiaſm which might rather be attributed to the diſpoſition of my own mind than to the talents of the author. True admiration

produces a deſire of making others partake of that which we feel: men are moderate when they mean to perſuade, and ſlacken their pace in order to be followed. I will therefore remove myſelf to ſome diſtance from the impreſſions I have received, and write on the Eloiſa as I think I ſhould do if time had brought me to old age.

A novel may be a deſcription of the manners of the moment, the play of imagination, which brings into a narrow compaſs ſeveral extraordinary events to captivate the intereſt of curioſity, or a great moral idea put into action and rendered dramatic. In this claſs Eloiſa is entitled to a place. The author's aim ſeems to have been to encourage to repentance, by the example of the virtue of Julia, women guilty of the ſame crime with her. I begin by admitting all the objections which may be made to the plan. It will be thought dangerous to be concerned for Julia; that it is giving

a charm

a charm to crimes, and that the injury this novel may do to young girls yet in a ſtate of innocence is more certain than the utility of which it may be to ſuch as are not. This criticiſm is juſt. I wiſh Rouſſeau had deſcribed Julia culpable by the paſſion of her heart only. I am alſo of opinion that it is for none but pure hearts that moral diſcourſes ought to be written. In the firſt place, they perhaps convey improvement rather than operate a change, and are better guides in the paths of virtue than meſſengers to recal from error; if however they be deſtined to the ſervice of virtuous minds, they may at the ſame time be uſeful for ſuch as are unhappily become corrupted. With what bluſhes for a great fault do moraliſts cover thoſe to whom they deſcribe the remorſe and anguiſh which a leſſer ought to cauſe! It ſeems alſo, that indulgence is the only virtue which it is dangerous to preach, although the practice of it be ſo uſeful.

Crimes, abſtractedly conſidered, muſt excite indignation. Pity can have its ſource in nothing but the intereſt inſpired by the guilty perſon; morality ought to be ſevere in itſelf, but its application ſhould be tempered with goodneſs. I am therefore ready to agree with the cenſors of Rouſſeau that the ſubjects of Clariſſa and Grandiſon are more moral, but the real utility of a novel conſiſts more in the effect than in the plan, in the ſentiments it inſpires rather than in the relation of events. If, after reading Eloiſa, we feel ourſelves more animated with the love of virtue, if we be more exact in the diſcharge of our duties, and if beneficence, retirement, and a ſimplicity of manners, have more attractions for us, let us pardon the author, and ceaſe to condemn the novel, if ſuch be the impreſſions it leaves upon our mind. Rouſſeau himſelf ſeemed to be of opinion the work was dangerous; he thought the amours only of Julia were written in

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letters full of fire, and that the image of virtue, the tranquil happineſs of Madame de Wolmar would appear inſipid compared with theſe animated deſcriptions. He was miſtaken. In his fictions, as well as in truth, the ſtorms of the paſſions and the peace of innocence ſucceſſively agitate and calm.

The intention of Rouſſeau was to write a moral work, and in order to do this, he gave it the form of a novel. He has deſcribed the ſentiment which reigns in this kind of compoſition. But if it be true, that men are not to be moved without the aid of a paſſion, and that but few are animated by thought, and elevated by the power of reflection to the enthuſiaſm of virtue, without the addition of a charm proceeding from a ſentiment foreign to it, but which yet gives life to that abſtracted love of perfection; if the language of angels has ceaſed to have an effect upon them, ought not even an angel to decline the attempt? If, ſo to ſpeak, it be

neceſſary to drag men to virtue; if to intereſt them their imperfection requires the eloquence of a paſſion, is Rouſſeau to be blamed for having made choice of that of love? What other paſſion would have approached nearer to virtue? That of ambition? This is always accompanied by envy and hatred. The thirſt of fame? This ſentiment is not of a nature ſuitable to every man, and is not ſo much as underſtood even by ſuch as have not felt it. What a theatre and what talents does this paſſion require! Who are the perſons to be inſpired with it, except thoſe whom nothing can prevent from feeling its effects? Of what uſe are books to the few whoſe minds are ſuperior to thoſe of mankind in general? Love only was capable of inſpiring univerſal intereſt, of filling every heart, and proportioning itſelf to its energy. This paſſion was the only one which, directed by Rouſſeau, could become a ſpring of action of equal power and utility.

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In the firſt ages of the world, men were perhaps unacquainted with all the virtues which do not ariſe from love. This paſſion may ſometimes produce all thoſe which religion and morality preſcribe. The origin is leſs celeſtial, but it is poſſible to miſtake them one for the other. When the object of our worſhip is virtuous, we ourſelves ſoon become ſo; one virtuous perſon is ſufficient to produce a ſecond. We are virtuous when we love a proper object, and involuntarily perform what our duty commands. In fine, the neglect of ourſelves, the contempt for every thing ſought after by vanity, prepares the mind to virtue. When love ſhall be extinguiſhed, this will reign alone; when we are accuſtomed to put no eſtimation upon ourſelves except on account of another, when once we are entirely detached from our own perſons, we cannot again form the junction, and pity ſucceeds to love. This is the moſt probable hiſtory of the heart.

Beneficence and humanity, mildneſs and goodneſs, alſo, ſeem to belong to love. We feel for the wretched; the heart is always diſpoſed to tenderneſs, and reſembles a ſtring of a muſical inſtrument, from which a breath of air produces a ſound. The lover who poſſeſſes the affections of the object beloved, is, at the ſame time, a ſtranger to envy and indifferent as to the injuſtice of men. Their defects cannot irritate him, becauſe he is unaffected by them; he bears with theſe, becauſe he ſcarcely feels what they are; his thoughts are concentered on his miſtreſs; his life is in her heart. The evil done him elſewhere he readily pardons, becauſe he ſoon forgets it, and thus he is generous without effort. Far be it from me, however, to compare this momentary virtue with that which is real, and more eſpecially to hold it in equal eſteem. But ſince it is neceſſary to intereſt the ſoul by ſentiments, to fix the mind to thoughts, and equally ſo to mingle paſ-

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ſion with virtue to gain them both a due attention, I again aſk if Rouſſeau be to blame; and whether or not the imperfections of men did not force him into the errors with which he is reproached?

I know he is blamed for having deſcribed a preceptor who ſeduces the pupil confided to his care: yet I confeſs, that, in reading the new Eloiſa, I ſcarcely made that reflection. In the firſt place, it ſeems that the circumſtance did not ſtrike Rouſſeau himſelf, and that he adopted it from the old Eloiſa; that all the morality of his novel is in the hiſtory of Julia; and that his intention relative to Saint-Preux was ſolely to deſcribe him as the moſt paſſionate of lovers. His work was written for women, and it is to them only that it can be uſeful or prejudicial. Does not the fate of love depend upon women? I confeſs this novel might lead aſtray a man in the ſituation of Saint-Preux; but the danger of a book

book lies much more in the expreſſion of ſentiments proper to all men, than in the recital of a concurrence of events, which, perhaps, never happening again, can never be made uſe of as an authority. Saint-Preux has neither the language nor principles of a corruptor; he had imbibed the ideas of equality, ſtill found in Switzerland, and was of the ſame age with Julia. Having gained each other's heart, they met in ſpite of themſelves: Saint-Preux employed no other arms than thoſe of truth and love; he did not attack, but involuntarily ſhewed himſelf. He had loved before he wiſhed to be loved himſelf: he deſired to die rather than run the riſk of diſturbing the peace of the object of his affections. He combated his paſſion, and this is the virtue of men; that of women, is to triumph over it. The example of Saint-Preux is not unuſual, but that of Julia might be ſo. Her ſituation reſembles all thoſe ariſing from the heart;

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and the hiſtory of her errors might be dangerous, were their effect not deſtroyed by her remorſe and future conduct of life, or were not, in this novel, virtue as indelibly delineated as love.

The deſcription of a violent paſſion is undoubtedly dangerous; but the levity and indifference with which other authors have treated the principles of it, ſuppoſe a greater corruption of morals, and contribute more to that effect. Julia, though culpable, inſults not virtue ſo much as ſhe who preſerves it, yet as a thing of but little value; whoſe exterior attachment to it is the reſult of calculation, and who without the love of it obſerves its precepts. Were indulgence reſerved for the exceſs of paſſion, would it often be exerciſed? Would the heart which ſhould have experienced it be to be deſpaired of? By no means: the mind when led aſtray may again recover all its energy; but nothing can be hoped from that which is diſguſted with virtue, and has been ſlowly

ly corrupted: the evil which ariſes by degrees is without remedy.

Perhaps Rouſſeau gave himſelf up to the impulſion of his mind and talents; he wanted to expreſs that which in the world is the moſt violent, paſſion and virtue in contraſt and united. But remark to what a degree he reſpected conjugal affection. It is poſſible, that according to the habitual courſe of his thoughts, he wiſhed, by the example of the misfortunes of Julia, and the inflexible pride of her father, to attack ſocial prejudices and inſtitutions. But what a reverence has he ſhewn for the ties to which nature has deſtined us! How ingeniouſly does he prove, that theſe are proper to render us happy, and may be ſufficient to the heart, even when it has experienced other delights! Who would dare to refuſe adopting his morality? Is he a ſtranger to the paſſions, or unacquainted with their empire? Has he acquired the right of ſpeaking to tender minds, and of telling them

what

what ſacrifices they have the power of making? Who ſhall dare to anſwer that theſe are impoſſible, when Rouſſeau informs us that the woman the moſt paſſionately fond, that Julia herſelf was capable of them, and that ſhe found happineſs in the accompliſhment of her duty, from which ſhe never ſwerved, during the remainder of her life? We do not think ourſelves obliged to reſemble a perfect heroine, but we ſhould be aſhamed not to poſſeſs the virtues of a guilty woman.

Cuſtom confines our young girls to convents. There is no danger that the novel of Rouſſeau will ever give them the leaſt averſion for ſuitable marriages. Theſe never depend upon themſelves: every perſon about them ſtudies the means of preſerving their hearts from tender impreſſions: they are watched over by the virtue, and ſometimes by the ambition alſo of their parents. Men themſelves, whimſical in their principles, wait until they are married before

they ſpeak to them of love. At this epocha the face of every thing about them is changed; they who approach them attempt not to fill their heads with romantic ideas, but to tarniſh their minds with inſipid pleaſantries upon every thing they have learned to reſpect. It is then they ought to read Eloiſa. In the firſt place they will perceive, while peruſing the letters of Saint-Preux, how far the perſons by whom they are ſurrounded are from being guilty of the crime of loving them; they will afterwards ſee, how ſacred a thing the tie of marriage is, and learn to know the importance of the duties attached to it; and the happineſs theſe may confer even when ſentiment lends them not the aid of charms. Who ever felt this to a greater degree than Rouſſeau, and what more ſtriking proof could he give that ſuch were his feelings?

Had he deſcribed two lovers whom fate had united, whoſe whole lives had been compoſed of days ſuch as thoſe of

which

which the expectation of one of them would once have been ſufficient to embelliſh a conſiderable part of the year; who paſſing together through the path of life, had been indifferent as to the country through which they wandered; who had adored in their infant a cheriſhed image, a being in whom their ſouls were united, their exiſtence confounded; who had accompliſhed every duty as the reſult of the impulſes of nature; in favour of whom the charm of virtue had been joined to the attractions of love, and the voluptuouſneſs of the heart to the charms of innocence. Piety would ſtill attach theſe perſons to each other; they would join in acknowledgments to the Supreme Being. Does perfect happineſs permit men to be atheiſts? There are benefactions of ſuch a magnitude as to change the deſire of acknowledgment into a real want; and others, which it would be ſo cruel a ſuffering not perpetually to enjoy, that the heart

endeavours to rely upon viſible hopes: chance is too ſterile an idea, and has never been ſufficient to relieve the anxiety of a ſuſceptible mind.

Arrived at this ſtate of happineſs, the two lovers would no longer be attached to each other by a ſecret tie, but in the face of men, before God himſelf, the connection which nothing could diſſolve would be formed; their name, children, place of reſidence, every thing would preſent to them their happy ſtate, and announce its duration; each inſtant would produce a new enjoyment. What varied happineſs does a cloſe union produce! Had Rouſſeau, to make us honour this reſpectable tie, deſcribed ſuch an union, his taſk would have been eaſy; but would he have inculcated virtue, or given inſtruction? Would he have done men a ſervice by exciting the envy of the wretched, and teaching the happy nothing more than they already know? The plan he followed was more moral.

He

He has deſcribed a woman married againſt her inclinations; having for her huſband nothing but eſteem, and bearing in her heart the remembrance of former happineſs and love for another object; paſſing her whole life, not in that vortex of the great world, wherein a woman may forget her huſband and lover, which permits not any thought or ſentiment to reign, extinguiſhes all paſſion, and reſtores calm by confuſion, and repoſe by agitation; but in abſolute retirement, alone with M. de Wolmar, in the country, near to nature, and by nature diſpoſed to all the ſentiments of the heart which it either inſpires or preſents to the imagination. It is in this ſituation, Rouſſeau has deſcribed to us Julia, creating to herſelf a felicity from virtue; happy by the happineſs ſhe confers upon her huſband, and by the education ſhe intends to give her children; happy by the effect of her example upon thoſe about her, and in the conſolation ſhe finds

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in her confidence in God. This happineſs is undoubtedly of another kind; it is more melancholy; it may be taſted of and tears ſtill ſhed; but it is more proper for beings who are but tranſient upon the earth which they inhabit; after enjoyment it is loſt without regret; it is an habitual happineſs which we entirely poſſeſs unabated either by fear or reflection; finally, it is one in which devout minds find all the delights love promiſes to others. It is this pure ſentiment, deſcribed with ſo many charms, that renders the novel moral, and which would have made it more ſo than any other had Julia always preſented us, not as the ancients have ſaid, virtue ſtruggling with misfortune, but with paſſion, ſtill more terrible; and if this pure and unſpotted virtue had not loſt a part of its charm by reſembling repentance.

I am alſo aware, that the impreſſion made by the deſcription of the domeſtic life of Madam Wolmar might be deſtroyed

ſtroyed by the reproach of having conſented to marry. But woe to her who ſhould think herſelf ſufficiently courageous not to imitate her! The rights and the will of a father may be forgotten at a diſtance from him; paſſion preſent effaces all remembrance; but who can reſiſt a generous father pleading his own cauſe; his power increaſed by his voluntary dependence; his unhappineſs in oppoſition to our own; and ſupplicating when we expect the uſe of his authority? He ſuſpends love itſelf. A father who ſpeaks as a friend, affects at the ſame time both nature and the heart, is ſovereign of the ſoul, and may obtain every thing.

Julia ſtill remains to be juſtified in not having avowed her fault to M. Wolmar. To have revealed it before her marriage would have been a certain means to render the marriage impoſſible, and to diſappoint her father. After an indiſſoluble tie had

attached her to M. de Wolmar, to deſtroy the eſteem he had for her would have been riſking his happineſs. I know not but the ſacrifice of her delicacy to the tranquillity of another may even be worthy of great admiration. Virtues which in the eyes of mankind differ not from vices are the moſt difficult to exerciſe. Is not a confidence in the purity of our intentions, and the elevation of ourſelves above the reach of opinion, the character of a diſintereſted love of that which is good? Yet how ſhould I admire the emotion which gave birth to the reſolution to avow all! This I with pleaſure obſerve in Julia, and at the ſame time I applaud Rouſſeau, who thought it not enough to oppoſe in the ſame perſon reflection to inclination; but that another perſon was neceſſary; that Claire ſhould take upon herſelf to diſſuade Julia from diſcovering her fault to M. de Wolmar, that Julia might preſerve all the charm of her ſentiment, and appear

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rather to be withheld than capable of reſtraining herſelf. Whatever the general opinion may be upon this point, it is at leaſt true, that when Rouſſeau is deceived, it is for the moſt part in attaching himſelf to a moral idea, rather than to one of another kind; it is between the virtues he chooſes, and the preference he gives that he is alone open to attack, or capable of being defended.

But how can the eloquence and talents of Rouſſeau be ſufficiently admired? What a work is his novel; and what ideas are collected in this book upon every ſubject! It does not appear that Rouſſeau had an imagination capable of inventing a ſucceſſion of new events; but how is the want of a variety of ſituations ſupplied by thoughts and ſentiments! His ſubject is no longer a romance, but letters upon different ſubjects, in which the future author of the *Emilia*, and the *Social Contract*, is diſcovered: thus the *Perſian Letters*, announced *Spirit of Laws*. Several ce-

lebrated writers have, in the ſame manner, diſplayed in their firſt performance the germ of all their future works. We begin by thinking upon every ſubject, and paſs from one object to another before we confine ourſelves to a plan or follow any method. In youth ideas crowd upon us, and we have then, perhaps, all we ever ſhall have, but they are yet in a confuſed ſtate: we afterwards give them ſome order, and, in the eyes of others, their number increaſes; we ſubmit them to reaſon, and, in reality, they acquire additional force.

Rouſſeau's letters for and againſt ſuicide are admirable performances, abounding in ſtrong thoughts and powerful metaphyſical argument. But the letter which condemns ſuicide is inferior to that which defends it, whether or not it be that natural honour and the inſtinct of conſcience, more than reaſon itſelf, conſtitute the force of that wiſe opinion, or that Rouſſeau felt himſelf born to be wretched,

ed, and feared by ſelf perſuaſion to deprive himſelf of his laſt reſource.

In his letter upon duelling he has combated that prejudice like a man of honour: and, while he ſhews the higheſt reſpect for courage, has felt that to have a right to cenſure it, and to make earneſt efforts to contain it within proper bounds, it is firſt neceſſary to be an enthuſiaſtical admirer of that which is real. I know it is Julia who writes this letter; but it is a fault in Rouſſeau, as author of a novel, and a defect as a thinking writer, always to make Julia ſpeak as if he ſpoke himſelf.

I muſt however confeſs, that I am often diſpleaſed at diſcovering Rouſſeau in Julia; I could wiſh to find in her the ideas but not the character of a man. Propriety, female modeſty, that even of a guilty woman, are wanting in ſeveral of her letters. Modeſty ſtill exiſts after crimes, when the commiſſion of theſe has ariſen from the paſſion of love. I likewiſe

wiſe think her continual ſermons to Saint-Preux ill-judged; a guilty woman may ſtill love virtue, but cannot be permitted to preach it; the word even ought not to eſcape her lips without being accompanied with a ſentiment of ſorrow and regret. I would not in any reſpect retrench the morality of Julia, but I could wiſh her to addreſs it to herſelf, and that the example of her own repentance were the only means ſhe ſhould think ſhe had a right to make uſe of to recal her lover to the paths of virtue. I cannot bear the love of ſuperiority ſhe preſerves with Saint-Preux. A woman is beneath her lover when once he has rendered her culpable; the charms of her ſex remain to her, but her rights are loſt; ſhe may lead the heart, but ſhe ought no longer to command.

The queſtion whether or not it was in nature that Julia ſhould have ſacrificed the only rendezvous ſhe thought ſhe could give to Saint-Preux, to the deſire

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of obtaining the diſmiſſion of Claude Anet, has frequently been diſcuſſed. I think it poſſible that an act of beneficence gained in her heart the aſcendency over the happineſs of ſeeing her lover. It may be in nature not to be reſtrained by the firſt of duties, and yet to yield to pity; this is an emotion which bears ſome relation to a paſſion, and, like it, acts inſtantaneouſly and directly upon the heart; it ſtruggles more ſucceſsfully with paſſion than the moſt important reflections on honour and virtue. But I ſometimes find in this work ideas of uncommon and I may ſay whimſical ſenſibility, and am of opinion theſe proceed from the head, for the heart can go no farther in invention. It may dictate new expreſſions, but all its motions to be true muſt be known: and in theſe all men are alike. For inſtance, I cannot bear the method which Julia ſometimes introduces into her paſſion, nor any thing which in her letters ſeems to prove ſhe is ſtill miſtreſs

of

of herſelf, and that ſhe previouſly takes a reſolution to become culpable. When a woman renounces the charms of virtue, it is neceſſary ſhe ſhould have thoſe at leaſt which ariſe from the indulgence of the inclinations of her heart. Rouſſeau was deceived if he thought, according to the common rule, Julia would appear more modeſt in ſhewing herſelf leſs paſſionately fond; the exceſs even of this paſſion ſhould have been her excuſe; and it is in deſcribing the violence of her love that he has diminiſhed the immorality of the fault which love had made her commit.

I have ſtill another criticiſm to make, in which I ſhall be as brief as poſſible, for ſuch criticiſms are not my object. The pleaſantries of Claire have not, in my opinion, either taſte or grace. To approach perfection in theſe, it is neceſſary to acquire in Paris that kind of inſtinct which rejects, without conſidering for why, every thing which, after the moſt ſcru-

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pulous examination, would be condemned. We may judge within ourſelves whether or not a thought be juſt; but we muſt be greatly accuſtomed to the manners and habits of ſociety to foreſee with certainty the effect of a pleaſantry. Beſides, Rouſſeau was the moſt unfit man in the world to write cheerfully: every thing affected him profoundly. He attached the greateſt thoughts to the moſt trifling events, and the moſt profound ſentiments to adventures of the greateſt indifference, whereas cheerfulneſs produces the contrary. Habitually unhappy, he wanted gaiety of character, and his mind was little fitted to ſupply the deficiency. He was ſo formed for paſſion and ſuffering, that his cheerfulneſs even bears the marks of conſtraint and ſeems to coſt him an effort; he has not the meaſure, becauſe he wants the ſentiment of it; and what he conſiders as rays of joy, are, in ſpite of him, obſcured by the ſhades of melancholy. How eaſy

was

was it for him to quit this kind of ſtyle! and what eloquence, what talents were his to tranſmit and communicate the moſt violent emotions of the mind!

The ideas of deſtiny, inevitable fate, and the wrath of the gods, diminiſh the intereſt of the *Phædra*, and of all the amours deſcribed by the ancients. Heroiſm and knight-errant gallantry conſtitute the charm of our modern romances. But it was Rouſſeau who firſt imagined and proved that the burning agitations of ſentiment ariſing from the unreſtrained inclination of the heart, ſentiment at once ardent, tender, delicate and paſſionate, was capable of being expreſſed.

How happily has he choſen the ſcene! Nature in Switzerland is in ſuch perfect uniſon with the great paſſions! How much does ſhe add to the effect of the intereſting ſcene of La Meillerie, and what novelty is there in the deſcriptions given of it by Rouſſeau! Theſe far exceed the Idyls of Geſner; his meads enamelled

with flowers, and his grottos interwoven with roſes. In what a lively manner we feel that the heart would be more affected, more open to love, near theſe rocks which menace the clouds, within view of that immenſe lake, in the boſom of foreſts of cypreſs, on the banks of rapid torrents, in this abode which ſeems to be upon the confines of chaos, than in ſcenes of gentler aſpect, as inſipid as the ſhepherds by whom they are inhabited.

There is one letter leſs noticed than the others, but which I have not been able to read without being inexpreſſibly affected; I mean the letter Julia writes to Saint-Preux in the moment ſhe is dying. Perhaps it is not ſo affecting as I imagine; it frequently happens, that a word which exactly anſwers to the ſtate of our heart, a ſituation that retraces in our minds certain ideas, or preſents us with chimeras, creates an illuſion, and we imagine the author is the cauſe of the effect produced

by

by his work. Julia informing Saint-Preux that her love for him has never abated of its ardour; Julia, whom I had believed cured, discovering to me a heart more deeply wounded than ever; the sentiment of happiness proceeding from the cessation of a long combat; the yielding to her passion, authorised by death, and which death is about to terminate; the sad and melancholy words, *adieu, for ever adieu!* mingling with the expressions of a sentiment created for the happiness of life; the certainty of dying, which gives to all her words so solemn and true a character; the predominating idea; the object which alone engages her attention, in a moment, when most men concentrate within themselves what remains to them of thought; the calm which in the instant of death misfortune more certainly gives than courage; in fine, every word of the letter filled my mind with the strongest emotion. With what regret we come to the

the end of this novel, which has interested us in the same manner as if it had related an event of our own lives, and without afflicting our hearts, has given a lively impulse to our reflections and our feelings.

LETTER III.

OF EMILIUS.

THE work of which I am now going to ſpeak has perpetuated the fame of Rouſſeau. It is that which his name firſt calls to our recollection, and by which the envy it excited is now confounded. The author of Emilius announced himſelf in his firſt writings. Before he erected this great edifice, he had ſhewn that he poſſeſſed the power; but admiration, a more than involuntary ſentiment, becauſe we take pleaſure in reſiſting it, would not, perhaps, have been generally

generally beſtowed upon the other works of Rouſſeau, if, obliged to crown Emilius, it had not been every where neceſſary to reſpect the traces of the talents which, in ſuch a manner, had been diſplayed to our ſight.

How admirable is that ſyſtem, which, receiving man from the hands of nature, unites all his efforts to preſerve in him the impreſſion nature gives, and to expoſe it to the world undiminiſhed! It has frequently been aſſerted, that this, in ſocial life, is impoſſible, but I know not why ſo noble a work is ſuppoſed to be confined to the ſavage. It is neither the progreſs of knowledge nor civil order, but error and injuſtice which ſeparate us from nature; man ſingly cannot acquire all the knowledge of mankind united during ſeveral centuries; but the thread of Ariadne conducts him from the firſt to the laſt ſtep. An accurate mind and an upright heart may conceive all the neceſſary combinations of the ideas and duties of

this life. The ideas of Rouſſeau were ſuppoſed to be properly eſtimated when his book was called a ſyſtematical work. The boundaries of the human mind have perhaps been ſufficiently extended within a century, to have given us the habit of reſpecting new opinions; but is it not poſſible there ſhould have been a time when we had ſo far wandered from natural ſentiments that they appeared as diſcoveries, and when a man of genius was neceſſary to recover us from our error, and bring us again into the road the traces of which had been effaced by deep-rooted prejudices? Of this ſublime effort Rouſſeau has ſhewn himſelf capable.

Man receives three educations, that of nature, his preceptor, and the world. Rouſſeau wiſhed to unite the two firſt. He developes the faculties of his pupil, like his bodily ſtrength, with time, without either abating or haſtening his progreſs; he knows he is to live amongſt men

men who are condemned to an exiſtence contrary to natural ideas; but as the law of neceſſity is the firſt he taught him to reſpect, he will bear with ſocial inſtitutions as the accidents of nature, and the juſt judgment and ſimple ſentiments with which he is inſpired will alone be the guides of his conduct, and the ſupporters of his mind. What ſignifies it whether upon the theatre of the world he be actor or ſpectator? He will not be ſeen to diſturb the performance; and if illuſion fails him, real pleaſure will make him ample amends. The cares this education would require are much complained of: in a peſtilential atmoſphere it is undoubtedly difficult to avoid the contagion; but Emilius, a child, would form himſelf in a city inhabited by Emiliuſes. But were the half of life devoted to inſure the happineſs of that of another, are there many men who ought to regret this employment of their time? If women, raiſing themſelves above

the ſituation in which they are placed, could aſpire to educate men; did they know how to dictate what theſe ought to do; had they the true ſentiment of their actions, what a noble deſtiny would be reſerved for them!

Rouſſeau directs the faculties to be developed before the ſciences are learned. In fact, the child whoſe underſtanding is not equal to his memory, will retain what he does not comprehend, and this habit diſpoſes to error. I know not but Rouſſeau may too long poſtpone the time when ſtudy is to be permitted. This period cannot be fixed; children differ from each other as well as men. What an excellent mind may he be expected to poſſeſs, who is taught to adopt nothing but what he has underſtood! Youth, I know, effaces the errors of infancy, and in its turn loſes its own; but he who, according to his age, ſhould have believed nothing but what was incontrovertible would arrive at the maturity of life with

with an incorruptible judgment; and moral truths, become to him geometrical propoſitions, ſhould remain firmly fixed in his mind from the hour of his birth to that of his death. He might not be preſerved from the impetuous power of the paſſions, but he would be ignorant of the apologies ſought for them: he might be overcome, but never led aſtray; and if he fell into the abyſs, he would ſee at leaſt where he was, and his eyes remaining open, would enable him to extricate himſelf by his own efforts. How admirable is that education, which, without either trick or violent conſtraint, treats the child as a feeble man, and not as a dependent being; which forces him to obedience, not by making him bend under the authority of a governor or father, with whoſe rights he cannot be acquainted, and whoſe power would be hateful to him; but under ſilent yet inflexible neceſſity, that eternal power which will command him when

all the efforts of his maſters will be vain; a power not degrading to the perſon who ſubmits to it, and which does not accuſtom one man to be obedient to others. Infancy precedes life; let it be the contracted picture of it. In the evening of a day, ſullied by our faults, a ſevere maſter comes not to inflict upon us puniſhment which ariſes not from them; but our friends forſake us if we wound their feelings, and we are no longer believed if we once are known to deceive. The only ſtratagem admiſſible with children is that of treating them like men; of making experience grow around them; and concealing from them the little importance attached to their firſt errors, and the charm of their little graces, the preſage of the empire other ſeductions may one day have. There is, however, one kind of experience which ought to be retarded as long as poſſible; I mean a knowledge of the vices of men: great vigour of mind is required to brave example

ample and ſupport injuſtice. Children ought never to feel the defects of thoſe about them. Let this great and final leſſon be reſerved for the time of life when the young man's way is already marked out. Virtue is not like glory, an object of emulation; they who aſpire to the one will ſuffer no equal; ſuch as ſeek after the other, ſometimes relax in their efforts when they find their companions idle. It is neceſſary to be a man to learn without danger to know mankind. It ſeems difficult to excite children to ſtudy without employing the ordinary means of education, and failing in the principle which preſerves in the child the dignity of man, by neither teaching him to command nor obey. Rouſſeau aſſures himſelf of his docility by the dependance of his nature: this obliges him to an exchange of ſervices, the firſt foundation of ſociety. Knowledge proceeds from the wants of men, and ſince all have acquired it, this has become

become ſtill more uſeful to each individual. Circumſtances may be ſo improved as to make the child feel the neceſſity of gaining it, and inſpire him today with an inclination for the ſame ſcience which yeſterday it was neceſſary to command him to ſtudy. But it will be aſked why he ſhould not be conducted by gratitude and tenderneſs? The firſt of theſe ſentiments is not conceived by a child: he does not unite together the preſent and the paſt. The ſecond ought to proceed from himſelf, but its effects develope not either judgment or thought: it has not the ſame power over all young hearts, nor does its action give them an idea of the life in which every kind of relation has its ſource in reaſon and neceſſity. Rouſſeau does not make uſe of ſuch means for infancy as would give impulſion to perſons of every age. With what care does he proſcribe the motives of emulation and rivalry which

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are ſo many preparatives for the paſſions of youth!

Emilius is neither a warrior, a poet, nor a miniſter; he is a man; one to whom nature communicates all the diſcoveries of ſociety. He ſees farther than the ſavage, yet in the ſame direction. He receives juſt ideas, but an error cannot enter his mind. Every body approves the education of Rouſſeau as far as it relates to the body. A certain and continued ſucceſs has left no room for objection. His moral ideas are on the ſame model. No importunate tie reſtrains the motions of the child: his liberty is not wounded by conſtraint. Rouſſeau exerciſes him by degrees, and ſuffers him of his own accord to do what his little ſtrength will permit. He does not haſten his mind, nor induce him to come to a concluſion without firſt preparing him for it by a knowledge of the circumſtances whence it muſt naturally ariſe. In fine, if the ſame mind had created the phyſical and moral world;

if one were the relief, ſo to ſpeak, of the other, why ſhould any perſon refuſe to find in the whole of the ſyſtem of Rouſſeau the proof of its truth? I do not know that I ſhould intirely follow with my ſon the method of Rouſſeau; my vanity would perhaps induce me to form him for ſome particular profeſſion, that he might early be advanced in the path he was to follow. However, I ſhould ſtill ſay to myſelf, It is in this manner man ſhould be brought up: this is the education of the ſpecies rather than that of the individual. But it muſt be ſtudied like the models of proportion which ſculptors have conſtantly before their eyes, whatever may be the ſtatues they have to form. It was the eloquence of Rouſſeau which reſtored maternal ſentiment to a certain claſs of ſociety; he taught mothers that duty and happineſs, and inſpired them with the deſire of not giving up to others the firſt careſſes of their infants. He excluded from children the ſervile

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adulation of valets, which makes them perceive their rank by ſhewing them the contraſt of their power and weakneſs; but he permits the tender cares of a mother which will not ſpoil the child who receives them. To be ſerved, renders children tyrannical, but to be loved, makes them ſuſceptible. Do mothers or children owe moſt acknowledgments to Rouſſeau? Mothers undoubtedly: has not he taught them (as has been ſaid by a lady whoſe wit and ſenſibility charm all thoſe to whom ſhe permits herſelf to be known) " to find " in their children a ſecond youth, the " hope of which is renewed for them " when the firſt has vaniſhed?" Every thing therefore is not loſt for the wretched mother whoſe faults or deſtiny have embittered her life! Theſe days of ſorrow have perhaps given her the experience which will preſerve from the ſame afflictions the object of her care and tenderneſs. In all the portraits of Rouſ-

ſeau,

ſeau, he is painted crowned by children. In fact, he has reſtored to infancy its happineſs; and this is perhaps the only one certain in life. Infancy is ſoon ſucceeded by youth; the ſeaſon of life falſely extolled; the ſeaſon of paſſions and tears. Yes, my daughter, I will liſten for thee to the leſſons of Rouſſeau; his eloquent goodneſs inſures to thee my indulgence: I ſhould perhaps have found it in my heart, but the impreſſion of his ſublime works is ſo profound, that it is confounded with that of nature itſelf. I will inſure to thee days of happineſs in that age when the imagination fears nothing for the future, when the moment preſent compoſes the whole of life, when the heart loves without inquietude, and pleaſure is ſenſible, whilſt pain is yet unknown. The happineſs of a child depends upon its mother: alas! I ſhall perhaps one day vainly preſs thee to my boſom, and my careſſes will no longer ſooth thee to tranquillity. Enjoy the ſhort mo-

ments of a felicity which on ceaſing to taſte we ceaſe to deſire, and which is not ſucceeded either by regret or repentance. I will not forget that infancy is followed by youth, nor will ſuffer the firſt period of thy life to be uſeleſs to the remainder, but ſhall conſider it as a part of the years thou haſt to paſs upon the earth, and take meaſures relative to them. Should I die before I have ſeen the ſucceſs of my cares, thou wilt at leaſt be indebted to me for the happy days of thy childhood; and this tender recollection ſhall make thee cheriſh my memory, and reſpect the ſublime genius which confirmed me in the method my heart was impatient to follow.

Rouſſeau did not intend Emilius to be an extraordinary man. Genius and heroiſm are exceptions in nature, and to which nature only gives an education. He has deſcribed him ſuch as every father may hope to render his ſon by following the ſame plan. To judge of this

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ſyſtem, I would conſider within myſelf whether all the effects ariſe from the means, and if theſe effects be deſirable? Now, it appears to me, that a child brought up according to the principles of Rouſſeau would be an Emilius; and that I ſhould be happy to have an Emilius for a ſon! I am far from adopting the ſyſtem of Helvetius, and of attributing to education alone the diſtance between Voltaire and other men. The talents of the mind are certainly by nature unequal, but the innate ſentiments of every heart may be developed by education; and I am of opinion, that this had always a manner of rendering, or rather leaving to the mind its primitive goodneſs. For one perſon born blind, how many perſons have loſt their ſight! I am aware, that to adopt the ſyſtem of Rouſſeau may appear extraordinary. His eloquence is univerſally admired; it has been thought natural to believe that his lively and prolific imagination, his ardent mind had

had acquitted nature with him, and that ſuch a talent for deſcription could not be united to a juſtneſs of mind neceſſary to trace an uſeful plan. His opinions have been ſaid to be impracticable or falſe, to place him in the claſs which men of mediocrity treat with diſdain, delighted to oppoſe the ſhort ſeries of their incontrovertible common ideas to the errors which may be met with in the chain of new thoughts of a great genius. For my part, I cannot believe that a work upon education, the ſyſtem of which is perfectly followed from the firſt to the laſt line, and which muſt inceſſantly awaken in us all our ſentiments and habitual ideas, could be intereſting, if by its fallacy it fatigued the mind. I beſides ſee adopted in parts, the plan which in the whole is rejected; and I cannot accuſtom myſelf to hear the ſtyle judged of without the thoughts, as if the effect of one was diſtinct from the impreſſion of the other, or that, if the whole ſyſtem

were not juſt, it would not be neceſſary the ideas and ſentiments of which the eloquence is compoſed ſhould conſtantly be the ſame. I confeſs, that to conform to the opinion of the multitude, who will not believe ſo many new thoughts to be true, it was in vain I agreed in every page with Rouſſeau; at the end of the book I ſaid to myſelf, it is certainly falſe; and I attributed to his talents alone the perſuaſion againſt which I could not defend myſelf; but I at length began to have a ſufficient reliance, upon reflection, not to fear the opinions developed by eloquence itſelf; this, aided by geſture and accent, has, at the head of armies or in a popular commotion, undoubtedly the power of captivating men by the moſt ſenſible parts, and of ſuſpending all their other faculties; but, in retirement, when we are not blinded by any paſſion, the impreſſion of talents remains and their illuſion diſappears. Why, if I find the author of Emilius be right, ſhould I prefer

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adopting the opinion I have not? To be upon my guard againſt myſelf, why ſhould I never liſten to the ſuggeſtions of my own mind; or, awed by the judgment of others, what reaſon is there for my taking the body for the ſhadow, as an infant takes this for the body?

Rouſſeau wiſhed to bring up a woman as well as a man according to the rules of nature, obſerving the natural difference between the ſexes; but I know not if it be equally neceſſary to ſecond nature in fortifying, if I may ſo ſpeak, women in their weakneſs. I perceive the neceſſity of inſpiring them with virtues men do not poſſeſs much more than that of encouraging them in their inferiority in other reſpects. They would perhaps contribute to the happineſs of their huſbands, were they by choice rather than weakneſs to confine themſelves to their deſtination, and to ſubmit to the object of their tenderneſs rather from love than the want of protection. They have need of great

ſtrength of mind; their paſſions and deſtination are in contraſt with each other in a country where fate often impoſes upon women a law never to love, or where, more to be pitied than the pious young virgins who devote themſelves to their God, they are obliged to grant all the rights of love, and deny themſelves every pleaſure of the heart. Is not a ſtrong perſuaſion of duty neceſſary to wander alone in the world, and to die without having been the firſt thought of another, or, which is ſtill more, having fixed our own upon an object we could love without remorſe?

Rouſſeau, it will be ſaid, gave himſelf no concern about the whimſical inſtitutions of vanity; he did not ſupport an edifice he wiſhed to throw down; why, therefore, has he made Sophia too weak for the moſt happy ſituation in the world? How, in a ſublime piece of eloquence, the ſupplement to his work, has he deſcribed Sophia betraying her huſband?

Rouſſeau

Rouſſeau himſelf condemned her education, and ſacrificed it to the deſire of diſplaying that of Emilius, in expoſing to view his courage in the moſt violent ſituation of the heart. How was he able to reſolve to ſhew us Sophia inferior to all, unfaithful to him whom ſhe loves? He has ſhewn her to be more than weak. Did ſhe want ſtrength of mind? She had married her lover. For what reaſon is the heart made ſorrowful by the melancholy concluſion of the hiſtory of Emilius and Sophia? Why are they ſeconded who, not believing the durability of ſentiments, think it a matter of indifference to begin or end by not loving each other; or why are women degraded by making her fall who ſeemingly ought to have been their model? Ah! Rouſſeau, this was knowing them badly; their heart may lead them aſtray, but it has the means of defending them. Not one of thoſe whom virtue alone could not reſtrain, united to thy Emilius and beloved

by him, would have exchanged peace and happineſs for ſhame and deſpair; not one, weak even as thou haſt ſuppoſed and deſcribed them, would have baniſhed herſelf from a terreſtrial paradiſe, by breaking the bonds of Hymen formed by love. I know not that it was neceſſary to ſhew Emilius expoſed to the moſt cruel misfortunes. The influence of virtue upon happineſs was a more uſeful ſight; there are undoubtedly pains from which it does not preſerve us; but there are ſo many which it prevents, that it is permitted to make uſe of that charm to attract us. But how many charms are contained in all the deſcriptions in the work! What ingenuity and extent in the ideas! Sometimes the author adds a new thought to a ſubject which ſeems exhauſted, or, by means of one only, opens an immenſe field for reflection. Wiſhing to form a man, he neceſſarily conſidered all the ideas which can enter the mind. How much meditation this ſuppoſes, or rather,

what originality in the writer, to whom every known object preſents itſelf under a new and true form, and who, for the moſt part, finds his wit in nature! To give to a treatiſe on education the form of the hiſtory of his pupil was a happy thought; nothing is foreign to the end, or turns the mind from the abſtracted idea; but thought repoſes and the attention is carried away. Rouſſeau makes the events of the child's life impreſs in his mind the truths he is to learn. If it be neceſſary to give him an idea of the right of property, his work is deſtroyed by Robert, poſſeſſor of the field upon which he has ſeized; the anger and vexation of Emilius ſtamp on his mind the remembrance of the explanation he receives. It is by the ſentiments of his heart that Rouſſeau engages his attention: he treats the reader in the ſame manner, and his ingenious addreſs employs ſimilar means to bring up the child and retain the attention of men. The moſt

trifling circumſtances ſtrike the imagination, and add to the truth of the deſcription. Detail makes but little impreſſion when it relates to things or perſons indifferent; but when it proceeds from great ſentiments, when the reader has previouſly, and for a conſiderable length of time, been intereſted in favour of Emilius and Sophia, the heart beats on ſeeing theſe ſhine againſt each other in the race; thus, in the age of the paſſions, amuſing themſelves with that juvenile pleaſure, and uniting the ſimplicity of childhood to the charm of youth. Happy by the ſentiment which makes an epoch of the moſt ordinary events of life, Emilius cannot uſe his ſtrength in this unequal combat: he feels his own power: he loves the weakneſs of Sophia, and taking her in his arms carries her to the end, falls at her feet, and acknowledges himſelf overcome. This delightful image has been frequently preſent to my mind. Rouſſeau in Eloiſa had deſcribed paſſion

exalted

exalted by the ſtruggle of remorſe, and the delirium of the fault. The deſcription of two lovers ignorant of repentance and fear, loving each other without the neceſſity of an obſtacle, the want of worn-out hearts, to animate them, is perhaps as great an effort of genius; truth and juſtice were ſtill more neceſſary, and ſuch ſoft accents, to affect the heart, muſt be very correſpondent to it. I know that it is poſſible to be ſurpriſed at the bad taſte Rouſſeau ſometimes permits himſelf; he is fond of contraſts, and makes them as well by words as ideas. This ſyſtem may be blamed; thought, but not the imagination, ought to ſee the extremes; the impreſſion of diſguſt it receives from them does not render truth more perceptible, and is uſeleſsly diſpleaſing. Rouſſeau has ſometimes been accuſed of exaggeration and falſe warmth; I confeſs that, though I have not always found all his ideas juſt, nor been conſtantly affected by all his impulſes, he always appeared to me

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natural. He differs from others, but it is for himſelf and not for them he ſpeaks. In ſome paſſages he may have been conſidered as a madman; but nothing is farther from affectation. His folly, if the word may be uſed, is the exaltation of every thing which is good, and conſiſts in ſome ideas to which, although abſtractedly true, men have not yet been reconciled. How is it poſſible not to adopt his love for virtue, and his paſſionate fondneſs of nature! He has not deſcribed it like Virgil, but he has engraved it upon the heart; and they who ſee the places in which he wandered, and the ſituations he preferred, recollect his thoughts and ſentiments.

What a writer was Rouſſeau! Much has been ſaid upon the danger of eloquence, but I think it very neceſſary when virtue is to be oppoſed to paſſion. It produces in the mind the impulſe which alone decides on the reſolution afterwards taken; reaſon ſeems long to offer

offer itſelf to the mind before the heart receives the impreſſion of it; but this once felt, reflection is no longer neceſſary; we act of ourſelves, we are led away. Eloquence only can add this ſtrength of impulſion to reaſon, and give it ſufficient life to combat upon an equal footing with the paſſions; but happy will be Emilius, if he who watches over his deſtiny preſerves him from ſtruggling with himſelf, and does not place him in the cruel ſituations which proceed from ſociety, and are in oppoſition to nature. May he follow the intention of Providence, who has commanded the obſervance of nothing which tends not to his felicity, even upon earth, and whoſe only motive of giving him virtue as a law, was to inſure his happineſs in not letting him depend upon the extent of his own knowledge, and to ſupply by obedience the want of lights to his reaſon! Rouſſeau is reproached with giving too late to his pupil the knowledge

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of a God; this truth of ſentiment might be known before the developement of the faculties of the mind. I am not however certain that this ſublime word in the enigma of the world would not be moſt ſtriking to him who ſhould firſt learn when capable to conceive it. It has been frequently remarked that daily wonders no longer excite our aſtoniſhment. A great idea which a child reduces to the level of his own underſtanding, compares with what he knows, and confounds with the little thoughts of his age, is leſs auguſt in his eyes than if for the firſt time it ſpread torrents of light upon the darkneſs of the univerſe. Rouſſeau believed, both in mind and heart, the exiſtence of God. How fine is his letter to the Archbiſhop of Paris! What advantage has real philoſophy over moſt religious ſects, when it does not attempt to ſhake the eternal baſis of all belief! What a maſter-piece of eloquence in ſentiment, of metaphyſic in proofs, is the profeſſion of faith of the

Savoyard

Savoyard Vicar! Rouſſeau was the only man of genius of his time who reſpected the religious principles of which we ſtand ſo much in need; he conſults natural inſtinct, and afterwards gives all the force of his reflection to prove it to his reaſon. Philoſophy rejects theſe intimate and involuntary perſuaſions which proceed not from calculation and the meditation of the mind. But I think he is far preferable who lends them the ſupport of his ſenſes, endeavours to fortify them in me, and far from oppoſing my reaſon to my inſtinct, endeavours to unite them to bear down the ſcale and put an end to the conflict. The profeſſion of the Savoyard Vicar was juſtly admired as a ſeries of ſtrong and profound reaſoning, which, in the whole, formed an opinion that was joyfully adopted in the midſt of the errors of fanatics and atheiſts. But this work was but the forerunner of the book, which has given us a new æra in the hiſtory of reaſon, ſince it has extended its empire;

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of that book, which ſeemed to anticipate the life to come, by diſcovering the ſecrets which are one day to be divulged to us; of that book, which mankind united might preſent to the Supreme Being as the greateſt ſtep they have ever made towards him; of that book, which the name of the author conſecrates and places beyond the reach of the contempt of mediocrity, ſince it was the greateſt adminiſtrator of the age in which he lived, the genius the moſt brilliant and juſt, who deſired to be heard upon that which men wiſhed to reject as vague and obſcure; of that book, the ſublime and majeſtic ſenſibility of which deſcribes the author loving mankind, as this ought to be cheriſhed by the guardian angel of the earth. Pardon me, Rouſſeau: my work is conſecrated to thee, and yet another is become the object of my veneration! Thou thyſelf, thou above all others, in thy heart paſſionately fond of humanity, wouldeſt have honoured him,

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who long pondering upon man's exiſtence on earth, after having indicated all advantages he may derive from a good government, has wiſhed to prevent his moſt cruel misfortunes by producing a calm in his agitated mind, and thus giving the chain of thoughts which form all his deſtiny. Rouſſeau knew how to admire, and as he never wrote but from the impulſion of his mind, vain jealouſies did not enter his heart. He would have felt a ſtrong deſire to commend him whom I dare not name, him whom I approach without fear, ſince I ſee nothing in him but the object of my tenderneſs, but for whom, when I contemplate him at a diſtance, I more than any perſon am penetrated with reſpect: finally, him whom poſterity, like the age in which he lives, will diſtinguiſh by all the titles of genius, but whom my deſtiny and my affection permit me to call my father.

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LETTER IV.

Of the Political Works of Rouſſeau.

OF all the ſubjects that have a claim to our attention, the conſtitution of governments is undoubtedly the moſt important, as well as the moſt difficult to underſtand. The legiſlator who ſhould know how to form a political body, unite its members by a common and immutable intereſt, aſſemble in his thoughts all the inconvenience and advantages that the ſhock of men's paſſions, the union of their faculties, the influence of climate, and the power of neighbouring empires might produce: he who ſhould know how to contain and direct by laws made

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to laſt for ever, the people who ſhould have confided themſelves to his genius, would have conceived the greateſt project poſſible, and have aſſociated himſelf, ſo to ſpeak, to the glory of the creation of the world, in giving to the inhabitants of it univerſal and neceſſary laws like thoſe of nature. But the human mind did not take in a moment the immenſe ſtep from a ſavage to a civil ſtate; ideas were ſlowly developed; circumſtances have ſometimes produced ſuch happy inſtitutions, that reflection ought to envy chance the glory of them. Moſt governments have been formed by the courſe of time and events, and the knowledge of their nature and principles has frequently followed rather than preceded their eſtabliſhment. The work therefore which gives us a thorough knowledge of the firſt baſis of the ſocial contract, which fixes the real foundation of all legitimate power, is as uſeful as it is worthy of admiration. Such is the end and

aim of the book of Rouſſeau; he demonſtrates that no convention which ſubmits general to particular intereſt can ſubſiſt; that it is madneſs to think a nation ought to be obedient to laws contrary to its honour, and that without national conſent no government can be eſtabliſhed or ſupported; that the dependence of the ſtrongeſt with reſpect to the weakeſt is contrary to reaſon and nature: and, finally, that the idea of a deſpotic ſtate is more abſurd than revolting; but, this government excepted (monſters are not reckoned among mankind), there is not one which Rouſſeau does not juſtify; he goes back to the origin of all authority upon earth, and proves even that monarchy eſtabliſhed by general conſent, founded upon laws which the nation only has the right of changing, is as legitimate and perhaps a better government than any other. I will however take the liberty to blame Rouſſeau for not conſidering as a free nation that which has its

repreſentatives for legiſlators, and for requiring a general aſſembly of all the individuals. Enthuſiaſm is admiſſible in ſentiment, but never in projects; the defenders of liberty ought to guard againſt exaggeration; the enemies of it would be ſo glad to think it impoſſible to be eſtabliſhed. The plan of the work of Monteſquieu is undoubtedly more extenſive than that of the *Social Contract*; all the laws that have been made are examined in it, and a thouſand advantages of detail may ſtill reſult from that book ſo remarkable by general ideas; but Rouſſeau confined himſelf to the ſtudy of the political conſtitution of ſtates, of that which has the power of giving laws, and not of laws themſelves. Monteſquieu is more uſeful to ſocieties already formed; Rouſſeau would be ſo to a ſtill greater degree to ſuch as ſhould wiſh to aſſemble for the firſt time: moſt of the truths he lays open are ſpeculative; more admiration, I confeſs, is due to him,

by whom an imperfect but a poſſible ſyſtem is created than to the philoſopher who, ſtriving againſt the nature only of things, offers to the imagination a plan without a defect. But it is perhaps neceſſary to have governed to be able to renounce ideal advantages, to reſolve to place the good which can be obtained by the ſide of the evil that ought to be ſupported, and to be ſatisfied with making a ſlow progreſs towards the end ſo rapidly obtained by thought. Finally, it may perhaps be neceſſary to have cloſely obſerved the wretchedneſs of the people, ſtill to conſider as a ſufficient glory the trifling alleviation given to their ills. Let us, therefore, place above the work of Rouſſeau that of the ſtateſman whoſe obſervations ſhall, by the knowledge of particular facts, have preceded the reſults of general ideas, and who ſhall apply himſelf, leſs as an artiſt in tracing the plan of a regular edifice, than as a man ſkilful in repairing that which he ſhall find

find already conſtructed. But let a great tribute of praiſe be beſtowed on him from whom we have learned every thing to be obtained by meditation, and who having ſeized a great idea has followed it in all its conſequences even to its moſt diſtant ſource. Rouſſeau borrows the method of geometricians to apply it to the ſeries of ideas; he reduces political problems to calculation, and ſeems to me to gain equal admiration by the ſtrength of his mind, either by his reaſonings or the form of them. The conception of the ſublime of metaphyſics does not require a ſupernatural power of attention: as the bounds of them are unknown, preciſion is not neceſſary; but when ſubjects which have a real baſis are to be treated in the abſtract, it is then that all the human faculties are ſcarcely ſufficient to elevate us without our loſing ſight of our object, and to deſcribe in the heavens the circle which is to be repeated upon the earth. But it was not ſufficient to have demonſtrated

the rights of men; it was neceſſary, and the grand talent of Rouſſeau in all his works to make them feel the value of them. It is perhaps impoſſible at all times for genius to tranſmit the whole of its ideas to every mind; but its eloquence muſt be captivating, and ſuch as muſt equally move and perſuade all men. The truths to which thought alone can attain ſpread but ſlowly, and time is neceſſary to complete univerſal perſuaſion; but the truths of ſentiment, thoſe which the mind ought to ſeize, woe to the talents which are not forced to the greateſt exertions the inſtant they preſent them.

I have been very partial to that liberty which places between men no diſtinctions except thoſe marked out by nature; and, with the author of the Letters upon the Mountain, I was deſirous of having it ſuch as it is conceived to be upon the ſummit of the Alps, or in their inacceſſible valleys. At preſent a ſentiment more ſtrong, without being contrary, ſuſ-

pends all my ideas; I believe inſtead of thinking, and adopt rather than reflect; but I did not ſacrifice my judgment without firſt having made of it the moſt noble uſe. I obſerved, that the moſt aſtoniſhing genius was united to the greateſt purity of heart and ſtrength of mind; and that neither character nor the paſſions would ever lead aſtray the moſt ſublime faculties with which a man was ever endowed; and after having dared to make this examination, I had faith in the reſt to ſpare myſelf the trouble of a reaſoning by which it will ever be juſtified. Ye, ſubjects of a great empire, about to aſſemble to conſult upon your rights; aſtoniſhed to find yourſelves after two centuries, in the exerciſe of the power you have again obtained, and to which you are perhaps yet but little fitted, I do not require of you that implicit faith which I have taken for my guide; but diſtruſt not reaſon; and ſince the ſucceſſion of events, by which for two

years the kingdom has been agitated, have brought you indebted to the progreſs of knowledge for the advantages which nations have never acquired but by bloodſhed, efface not the ſeal of reaſon and peace, which deſtiny will put to your conſtitution; and where unanimity ſhall permit you to expect the end at which you aim, aſpire to the glory of obtaining, without going beyond it. And thou, Rouſſeau, a great man ſo unhappy, whom we ſcarcely dare to regret upon this earth, which has ſo many times been watered with thy tears, why art not thou witneſs to the awful ſpectacle France is about to exhibit, to a great event, previouſly prepared, and in which, for the firſt time, chance will have no part! It is perhaps in this, that men would appear to thee more worthy of eſteem! If I am not much deceived, no perſonal motives now animate them. They will contribute nothing in common but that which they have the moſt precious.

precious. Ah! Rouſſeau, what happineſs for thee could thy eloquence be heard in this auguſt aſſembly! What inſpiration for talents is the hope of being uſeful! How different is the emotion when thought, ceaſing to fall back upon itſelf, has before it an end it has the power of attaining, and an action it can produce! The pains of the heart would be ſuſpended in ſuch great circumſtances. Man, abſorbed by general ideas, diſappears from his own eyes. Riſe, therefore, O Rouſſeau! riſe from thy aſhes; appear, and let thy efficacious wiſhes encourage in his career the man who ſets off from the extremity of evil, having for his aim the perfection of that which is good; the man whom France has named her guardian angel, and who, in her tranſports for him, has ſeen nothing but his duty towards her; him whom all ought to ſecond as if they ſupported the public welfare: in fine, the man who is deſerving of a judge, an admirer, and a fellow citizen like thee.

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LETTER V.

On the Taſte of Rouſſeau for Muſic and Botany.

ROUSSEAU has written ſeveral works upon muſic; of which art he was paſſionately fond during his whole life. The *Devin du Village* announces talents even for compoſition. He wiſhed muſical dramas to be adopted in France, and gave Pygmalion for an example. Theſe ought not perhaps to be rejected. When the words ſucceed to the muſic, and the muſic to the words, the effect of both is greater; theſe aid each other better when they are not forced

forced to go together. Muſic expreſſes ſituations, and words diſplay them. Muſic might deſcribe emotions beyond the reach of words, and words ſentiments too varied for muſic; but what eloquence is there in the monologue of Pygmalion! How probable it ſeems that the ſtatue ſhould be animated by his voice, and how ſtrongly are we tempted to believe the gods have nothing to do in this miracle!

Rouſſeau compoſed ſeveral ballads of ſimple and tender airs perfectly according with the ſituation of the mind, and which may ſtill be ſung in the moments of melancholy. Some of theſe ſeem to be national. When I heard them, I imagined myſelf tranſported to the ſummit of our mountains, and liſtening to the ſound of the ſhepherd's flute ſlowly prolonged to a great diſtance by the echoes which ſucceſſively repeat it. They called to my recollection the calm rather than melancholy muſic which accords

with

with the ſentiments of thoſe by whom it is liſtened to, and for them becomes the expreſſion of what they feel. What man of feeling has not been moved by muſic? The unfortunate man, when he can liſten to it, receives the pleaſure of ſhedding tears, and melancholy ſucceeds to his deſpair; whilſt we hear muſic our ſenſations leave no void, and are ſufficient to the mind as well as to the heart. Some airs create a momentary ecſtaſy; the joys of heaven are always preceded by the chorus of angels. How far remembrance is carried back by muſic! And how inſeparable this becomes from it! What man, agitated by the paſſions of life, hears without emotion the air which in his peaceful childhood animated his dances and ſports? What woman, when time has faded her beauty, can hear without tears the ſong which formerly her lover ſung for her only? The air of this ſong, ſtill more than the words, renews in her heart

heart the emotions of her youth; neither the aſpect of places, the ſight of objects by which we were ſurrounded, nor any acceſſory circumſtance connects itſelf ſo ſtrongly with the events of life as muſic; the remembrance it produces is not accompanied with regret, and the pleaſures it retraces are for a moment reſtored. this is feeling rather than recollection. Rouſſeau liked no airs except ſuch as were melancholy; in the country it is this kind of muſic we deſire. All nature ſeems to accompany the plaintive ſounds of an affecting voice, but the mind muſt be gentle and pure to feel theſe enjoyments. A man agitated by the remembrance of faults, cannot ſupport the reverie into which affecting muſic plunges the mind. A perſon tormented by ſtinging remorſe, could not be fond of thus approaching himſelf, of diſtinguiſhing all his ſentiments, and in ſlow ſucceſſion feeling the effect of each. I am diſpoſed to confide in him who is charmed with muſic,

muſic, flowers, and the country. An inclination to vice undoubtedly ariſes in the heart of man; for every ſenſation he receives from the objects which ſurround him tends to alienate him from it. I have often thought, in rural retirement, at the end of a fine day, at ſight of the ſky covered with ſtars, that the ſpectacle of nature ſeemed to ſpeak to the ſoul of virtue, hope and goodneſs.

Rouſſeau amuſed himſelf for many years with botany; this is a manner of intereſting the mind in detail in the country. He adopted a ſyſtem which perhaps ſtill proves how much he found the pleaſure which the contemplation of nature gives, diminiſhed by the remembrance even of mankind. He diſtinguiſhed plants by their form, and not by their properties. He thought they were degraded by being conſidered in no other point of view than that of the utility of which they might be to men. I confeſs it does not appear to me that this opinion

opinion ought to be adopted: the works of the Creator are not diſparaged by being thought deſtined to a final cauſe, and the world appears more majeſtic and awful to him who perceives in it but one great deſtination; but the poetical and wild imagination of Rouſſeau could not ſupport the idea of uniting to the image of a ſhrub or flower, the ornament of nature, the remembrance of the ills and infirmities of mankind. How charmingly in his confeſſions does he deſcribe his tranſports on finding a particular plant *! How forcibly this brought to his recollection every thing he had formerly felt! It produced in him the effect of the air which is forbidden to be played to the Swiſs out of their country, for fear they ſhould deſert. This plant might give him an inclination to return to the country of Vaux; one ſimilar circumſtance preſented to his memory all the

* De la perrenche.

the intereſting objects of his life. His miſtreſs, his country, his youth and amours; they were all reſtored to him, he felt them all at once.

ON

LETTER VI.

On the Character of Rouſſeau.

I DID not begin by deſcribing the character of Rouſſeau. He himſelf wrote not his confeſſions until he had finiſhed his other works; he did not ſolicit the attention of men for himſelf, until he had merited their gratitude by conſecrating to their ſervice his genius for twenty years. I have followed the track he has marked out, and by the admiration which his writings muſt inſpire have prepared myſelf to judge his character, often calumniated, and perhaps not unfrequently too juſtly

 blamed.

blamed. I ſtrive not to find it in contraſt with his works: I cannot unite contempt and admiration, and I am unwilling to believe, that in writings the ſtamp of truth can be imitated by wit, or that in pure and ſuſceptible hearts there do not remain certain ſigns whereby they diſtinguiſh each other. I will therefore endeavour to deſcribe Rouſſeau; but I ſhall often depend upon his confeſſions. This work undoubtedly has not that character of elevation deſirable in the man who ſpeaks of himſelf; that which is an apology for perſonality, becauſe it ſeems natural that he who poſſeſſes it is of importance in his own eyes as well as in ours; but it appears to me difficult to doubt of his ſincerity: men conceal, rather than inſert, that which is contained in confeſſions. The events related in them appear true in all their minute particulars. There are circumſtances which would never occur to the imagination. Rouſſeau, beſides, had a ſentiment of pride

which

which vouches for the veracity of his memoirs. He believed himself to be the beſt of men, and would have bluſhed to think it was neceſſary when ſhewing himſelf to the world, to conceal even one of his faults. In fact, he ſeems to me to have written his memoirs to ſhine as an hiſtorian, rather than as the hero of the hiſtory. He paid more attention to the portrait than to the figure, and obſerved and delineated himſelf as if he had taken his own perſon for a model. I am certain his firſt wiſh was to give his own likeneſs, and therefore am of opinion, it is poſſible to deſcribe Rouſſeau after his confeſſions, as well as a long intimacy with him would have enabled any perſon to do it; for while ſtudying what he ſays, we may permit ourſelves not to think as he does. The judgment of a man, by the character he gives of himſelf, although we may not adopt it, is ſufficient to make him known.

Rouſſeau muſt have had a figure not

remarkable on a tranſient view, but which could never be forgotten when once he had been obſerved ſpeaking. He had little eyes which had no expreſſion of themſelves, but ſucceſſively received that of the different impulſions of the mind. His eyebrows were very prominent, and ſeemed proper to ſerve his moroſeneſs, and hide him from the ſight of men. His head was for the moſt part hung down, but it was neither flattery nor fear that had lowered it; meditation and melancholy had weighed it down like a flower bent by the ſtorm or its own weight. When he was ſilent, his phyſiognomy had no expreſſion; neither his thoughts nor affections were apparent in his viſage, except when he took part in converſation; but the moment he ceaſed ſpeaking, they retired to the bottom of his heart. His features were common; but when he ſpoke they all acquired the greateſt animation. He reſembled the gods which Ovid deſcribes to us, ſometimes

quitting

quitting by degrees their terreſtrial diſguiſe, and at length diſcovering themſelves by the brilliant rays emanating from their countenance.

His mind was ſlow, but his ſoul was ardent, and by thinking he became impaſſioned; he received no ſudden and apparent impulſions, but his ſentiments increaſed by reflection. He perhaps conceived an affection for a woman, after a conſiderable length of time, by thinking of her during her abſence. She left him in a ſtate of indifference, but at her return found his mind inflamed. Sometimes indeed he loved you ſtill when you left him; but if you had ſaid one word which diſpleaſed him, he remembered, examined and exaggerated it, reflected upon it for a week, and ended by quarrelling with you: this rendered it almoſt impoſſible to undeceive him. The light he received on a ſudden did not deſtroy the errors ſo ſlowly and profoundly rooted in his heart. It

was very difficult to be long together upon good terms with him; a word, a geſture became the ſubject of his moſt profound meditations; he connected the moſt trifling circumſtances like geometrical propoſitions, and arrived at what he called a demonſtration. I am of opinion that imagination was his greateſt faculty, and abſorbed all the reſt. He dreamed rather than exiſted, and the events of his life paſſed in his head rather than elſewhere. This manner of exiſtence ſeemed of a nature to render him a ſtranger to miſtruſt, ſince it did not permit obſervation, but it did not prevent him from ſeeing, and its only effect was, perhaps, that of making him ſee in a bad light. His heart was tender; of this, after having read his works, it is impoſſible to doubt; but his imagination ſometimes ſtood between his affections and his reaſon, and deſtroyed their power. If he ſometimes appeared without feeling, this was becauſe he perceived not objects as they were, and

his heart would have been more affected than ours had he ſeen with our eyes. The greateſt reproach to his memory, and that againſt which no perſon will defend it, is his having abandoned his children; yet this ſame man would have been capable of giving the greateſt examples of paternal love, and expoſing his life twenty times to preſerve them, had he not been convinced that he ſpared them the greateſt crimes by leaving them ignorant of the name even of their father; and if he had not thought that they might be induced to become the parricides of his memory. The unworthy woman who paſſed her life with him, had ſufficiently learned his character to know how to render him unhappy; and the account I have heard of the means ſhe made uſe of to augment his fears, as well as to make him certain of his doubts, and to take advantage of his defects, is ſcarcely credible *.

Rouſſeau

* A Geneveſe, who was intimate with Rouſſeau dur-

Rouſſeau was not a madman, but one of his faculties, his imagination, was inſane; he had a great power of reaſoning on abſtract ſubjects, upon objects which have no exiſtence but in thought, but was abſolutely extravagant upon thoſe, the meaſure of which is not found in ourſelves; he had too great an abundance of every thing he poſſeſſed; and was to ſuch a degree ſuperior, that he was not far from a ſtate of madneſs. He was a man fit to live in retirement with a very few perſons of a confined underſtanding, that nothing might add to his interior

ing the laſt twenty years of his life, has frequently deſcribed to me the abominable character of his wife, and the atrocious ſolicitations of that unnatural mother that he would ſend his children to the hoſpital, inceſſantly repeating to him, that thoſe whom he believed to be his friends would endeavour to inſpire his children with a mortal hatred againſt him; and ſtriving, by her calumnies and feigned apprehenſions, to fill him with grief and miſtruſt. It is undoubtedly a great folly to hearken to and love ſuch a woman; but this folly ſuppoſed, all the reſt are probable.

interior agitation, and that he might be ſurrounded by a calm. He was a good man; his inferiors adored him; thoſe eſpecially enjoyed in him his good qualities; but Paris had diſturbed his mind. He was born for the ſociety of nature, and not for that of artificial life. All his works expreſs the honour with which this inſpired him; it was impoſſible for him either to comprehend or ſupport it; he was like a ſavage upon the banks of the Oroonoko, who feels himſelf happy to paſs his life in ſeeing the water run. He was born contemplative, and his ſupreme happineſs conſiſted in revery; his heart and mind by turns took entire poſſeſſion of him. He lived in thought; the world paſſed ſoftly under his eyes; men, love, and politics, ſucceſſively engaged his attention; after walking alone the whole day he returned calm and mild. Do ill-diſpoſed perſons gain by being alone? It cannot, however, be ſaid that Rouſſeau was virtuous, becauſe, to merit this praiſe, actions,

tions, nay a ſeries of actions are requiſite; but he was a man whom it was neceſſary to leave to his meditations, to conduct as a child, and liſten to as an oracle: whoſe heart was ſuſceptible to an extreme, and which deſerved to be delicately managed, not with ordinary precautions, but with thoſe which ſuch a character required; thoſe by whom he was approached could not depend upon the rectitude of their intentions with reſpect to their conduct towards him. Rouſſeau poſſeſſed leſs than any perſon the divine power of reading the heart: men were obliged to ſhew what they were, and exteriorly to demonſtrate what they felt on this account. I am aware that I ſhall be told this is not the moſt noble manner of loving; but, for my part, I am of opinion, that in matter of ſentiment, there is but one rule, that of rendering the object of our affections happy; all others are invented by vanity rather than delicacy.

Rouſſeau

Rouſſeau has been accuſed of hypocriſy; becauſe in his book he is found to ſupport ſubtle opinions. Every thing that is exaggerated is falſe, ſay they who wiſh to make us believe that we are farther from the end by going beyond than by not reaching it. There are perſons who exaggerate even with the greateſt calm of mind, who, without being gradually led into it by the ſeries of their thoughts, immediately advance an opinion in the extreme, and determine to defend it: theſe take a reſolution, and are not impelled. Others, in the different circumſtances of their lives, or the various ſituations they deſcribe in their works, feeling the expreſſion of the heart deficient in them, make this too high-ſounding for fear of miſſing it. Theſe may be accuſed of hypocriſy, but he who is elevated above himſelf by the tranſports of his imagination, and perhaps above his readers; who is carried away by the elaſticity of his mind, and

feels

feels for a moment what perhaps he will not always be capable of feeling; is this a man to be charged with hypocriſy? This elevation is the delirium of genius; but liſten to him farther; it is poſſible that when he was accuſed of having ſurpaſſed the end, he had only overleaped the bounds. However, Rouſſeau is to blame if he wants that moderation, without which it is impoſſible to perſuade ſuch as believe, that the warmth of imagination is prejudicial to juſtneſs of mind: he is farther to be blamed, if he did not feel moral impulſion to be independent of that which is phyſical, and that there is no need of giving it beyond the degree to which it is intended to be communicated. But, ſhould I think Rouſſeau's ſentiments exaggerated if I felt them all and adopted his opinions? Rouſſeau is farther accuſed of hypocriſy, on comparing his conduct with his principles. Actions ariſe from the character, and may give an idea of it; but thoughts often

come

come by inſpiration; and a man intoxicated with the divine ſpirit which animates him, is no longer himſelf, although he be more true than ever, and entirely abandons himſelf to the ſentiments he feels in writing. There are a few pieces of eloquence, of which the auguſt and meaſured, calm and firm, ſimple and noble character, prove beyond a doubt their author to poſſeſs all the virtues of which he ſpeaks; but if Rouſſeau had not this kind of eloquence, were it true that he defends the greateſt, fineſt, and moſt affecting truths with too poetical an enthuſiaſm, could we ſuſpect him of hypocriſy? Rouſſeau an hypocrite! I ſee nothing in him, during his whole life, but a man ſpeaking, writing, and acting involuntarily. His actions did not reſemble his principles; but he was culpable in applying them falſely rather than in giving them up. It ſometimes appeared that his mind was exhauſted by his thoughts, and that it had

no

no longer ſufficient elaſticity to act. A perſon who was very intimate with him has often deſcribed to me the delight he took in giving himſelf up to the moſt abſolute repoſe. They one day walked together upon the mountains of Switzerland, and came to an enchanting ſituation, whence the eye diſcovered an immenſe ſpace; they reſpired in this elevated ſpot that pure air of nature with which the breath of man has not yet been mingled. Rouſſeau's companion was then in hopes that the influence of the place would animate his genius, and already ſeemed to hear him ſpeak; but Rouſſeau immediately began playing upon the graſs as he had done in his childhood; happy in being free from his reflections and his feelings, he was not tormented by any of his faculties, and this was perhaps one of the pleaſanteſt moments of his life. Was not he in his infancy ſometimes loſt in meditation? And does not he ſeem to have gone through

life

life like a blind man, judging of every object by his reaſonings rather than by obſervation?

There are parts in his confeſſions which ſhock noble minds, and others, of which he himſelf inſpires the horror by the odious colours in which he deſcribes them. Some perſons, after reading theſe confeſſions, have undoubtedly a right to be diſpleaſed at his thinking himſelf the beſt of men; but, for my part, this opinion of his has not alienated me from him; I have concluded from it that he felt himſelf to be a good man. Men judge of themſelves by their character rather than their actions, and there is no other means of knowing a heart ſuſceptible of error and folly. It is ſomewhat extraordinary that Rouſſeau ſhould relate every kind of fault he had committed; but if this proceeds not always from frankneſs, I am of opinion it is ſometimes a great trial of ſtrength: he reſembles thoſe good writers who endeavour

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to introduce a mean or trivial word into their language. I confeſs that it is with pain I obſerve in his confeſſions the errors which proceed from the habits of his firſt deſtination; but elevation of mind is perhaps a quality loſt by a ſingle fault, it ariſes from a conſciouſneſs of what we are, and this is formed upon the courſe of our whole life; the remembrance of a ſingle circumſtance at which we bluſh, diſturbs the noble aſſurance which conſcience inſpires, and diminiſhes even the value of it in our own eſteem. It is true, that of all vices baſeneſs is that for which we are diſpoſed to have the leaſt indulgence: the exceſs of one quality may be the origin of every other; this alone ariſes from the deprivation of all: but although there be in the memoirs of Rouſſeau ſome things which are certainly ignoble, they do not appear to me to agree either with his character or the reſt of his life. They might be taken for acts of folly, or abſences of mind;

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in him they ſeem to be caprices; he is not, ſo to ſpeak, the tree of the fruit he bears; he is perhaps the only man who has ever been mean at certain moments; for of all his defects meanneſs was the moſt habitual. Theſe diſtinctions will perhaps appear too ſubtle to juſtify him; I know not, however, whether, among the aſtoniſhing contraſts of which men inceſſantly give the example, it be not neceſſary to learn to diſtinguiſh them by the lighteſt ſhades of character. I think alſo, that when in the life of a man there are found impulſions and actions perfectly good, when his writings breathe the moſt noble and virtuous ſentiments, and he employs a language each word of which bears the impreſſion of truth, we ought to ſearch for the cauſe of his errors, and not all at once to forget the admiration with which he has inſpired us, but ſlowly to withdraw it. In fine, virtuous, like vicious characters are better diſtinguiſhed by particulars of conduct

than by public actions. Moſt men may, once in their lives, either in good or evil, be different from themſelves.

Whether we hear Rouſſeau ſpoken of by perſons who have loved him, or read his works, we find in his life, as well as in his writings, ſentiments which can appertain to none but good and pure minds. When we ſee him at variance with mankind, he intereſts us leſs; but the moment he returns to nature, all his emotions anſwer to our heart, and the ſentiments of our mind are expanded by his eloquence. How delightfully has he deſcribed his reſidence at Charmettes, and what happineſs did he enjoy in the peace which reigns in the country! Young men commonly deſire motion, and call the want they have of it vivacity: but ardent minds are fearful of it, becauſe they foreſee what efforts are neceſſary to quit repoſe: they feel that the fire which is lighted up may devour; but Rouſſeau, peaceful in his retreat, felt not the deſire

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of exerciſing his genius. To love and meditate were ſufficient to his faculties. In loving, whoever was the object of his tenderneſs, it was on her he indulged his chimerical imagination; it was not upon Madame de Warens, but upon love he thought; his feelings did not torment him, nor did he ſtudy in the eyes of his miſtreſs the degree of paſſion with which he had inſpired her; it was ſome one whom he might love that was neceſſary to him. Madame de Warens, without giving herſelf the leaſt concern about the matter, conſtituted his happineſs. It may perhaps be true, that a great man with mental powers ſo active, that Rouſſeau, eſpecially, never felt a paſſion which entirely came from the heart; this would have enforced his attention, and not have gratified his imagination. It was neceſſary that the faculties of his mind ſhould have ſome connection with his ſentiments, and that he ſhould feel the deſire of endowing his miſtreſs with certain qualities. A

woman, as perfect as human nature will permit her to be, would have been his beſt friend, but not the object of his affections. I am convinced that every choice he made was from caprice; and am certain that Julia, of all the women in the world, was her by whom he would have been leaſt ſmitten; he was a man who could be paſſionately fond of nothing but illuſions. Happy would it have been for him, had not his heart been more diſturbed by them than by realities. He was naturally good, a man of feeling and unſuſpicious; but when that cruel folly of continually repining at the injuſtice and ingratitude of men had once taken poſſeſſion of his mind, he became the moſt wretched of beings; the peaceful moments of his youth, which he ſo charmingly deſcribed, were no more renewed; his muſings, which once were hopes, were now productive of nothing but regret. In his early years at Turin, a ſign from his young miſtreſs

miſtreſs * raviſhed his heart; and in the latter part of his life the ſalute of an old invalid, who ſeemed not to hate him, was the only good he deſired. But recollect how much in his youth he eſteemed mankind. If he were afterwards more changed than another, this was becauſe he leſs expected the firſt lights he was forced to receive: for who can loſe without pain the indiſcriminating goodneſs of his youth, or the cheering hopes and ſoft confidence of the ſmiling morn of life? Rouſſeau was not able to ſupport the loſs of theſe; but where is the man, who, without ſuffering, ſupports dejection of mind, or whoſe

 imagination

* The reader will recollect the charming deſcription Rouſſeau gives, in his confeſſions, of Madame Baſile, a ſhop-keeper in Turin, who with her finger made a ſign to him in a glaſs to fall upon his knees before her; and in his mad dialogue of *Jean Jacques with Rouſſeau*, of the tranſport he felt when he was ſaluted by an old invalid, *not yet being*, ſaid he, *engaged in the general conſpiracy againſt me.*

imagination can be clouded without cauſing him regret?

Rouſſeau has often been accuſed of being by nature ungrateful; but I know not that his averſion to benefactions is a proof of it. Some hearts may be too ſtrongly impreſſed with that which gratitude requires, to ſubmit to owe it to perſons they do not love. Others, perhaps, find more charms in that ſentiment, when it ariſes from an invincible attraction, from a voluntary choice which no duty commands. It is to be feared, that gratitude does not inſpire us with ſufficient attachment to ſuch as were indifferent to us, but that it has but too great a part in the ſentiments we feel relative to our friends; in fine, in my opinion, that haughty independence ſeems noble if it be applied to ſtrangers, and delicate if it relates to the objects of our affections. Happy is that man who has never wanted any thing from others except what proceeds from the heart, who has not

ſubmitted but becauſe he loved, and upon whom nobody, except the authors of his exiſtence, ever had any claim, unleſs it was that which they received from his affection. Rouſſeau, it is true, by reducing his principles to a ſyſtem, became expoſed to all the ridicule to which they are liable, and frequently even to the errors which they approach when exaggerated; but the very oſtentation of that hatred for benefactions has ſuch advantages, the proofs neceſſary to be given of it are ſo clear and rare, that at preſent there would be no danger in exciting in this way the vanity of mankind *.

Rouſſeau has been reproached (for he whom every man of feeling ought to defend as if he were pleading his own cauſe, has found many accuſers) of having the deſire of being ſingular. Could he, who at

* Is it poſſible not to admire the noble pride with which poor Rouſſeau, of Geneva, conſtantly refuſed the penſion offered him by the King of England?

pleaſure obtained the laurel-wreath, wiſh to make himſelf ſingular by caprice? And, when the ſuperiority of his genius rendered him ſo extraordinary, is it poſſible to believe that he ſtrove to be ſo by a puerile originality? He wiſhed, ſay his accuſers, to make himſelf remarkable by every poſſible means. Yet no man was ever more fond of ſolitude. How happy was he all the time he paſſed in the iſland of Saint Peter! Charming abode! Delightful aſylum! It is there the ſoul of Rouſſeau ſtill wanders! To the places which ſo inſpired his active mind, we ought to go to do homage to his memory! How eaſily ſuſceptible minds conceive the happineſs he enjoyed in this retreat! Rouſſeau there abandoned himſelf to his profound meditations (others might have given themſelves up to reverie); and whilſt he reflected upon time, life and the world, an unhappy woman would have let the calm of nature gently penetrate to her heart.

Men are perhaps more fitted for ſolitude

tude than they imagine. Towards the middle of life a man might be happy in it; he would no longer be drawn into the world by hope; the ideas he carried with him to his retreat, would occupy all his thoughts, and death would ſtill be at too great a diſtance to make him feel the want of being ſurrounded by the living.

Rouſſeau avoided what we call ſociety, but he loved the peaſants; and the motion which the appearance of men cauſes in the country was agreeable to him. The inhabitants of the iſland of Saint Pierre adored him; they were ſtruck with his goodneſs. The wretched are mild in their moments of repoſe. Rouſſeau, delighted with the ſimple manners of theſe peaſants, conceived a ſecond time his primitive eſteem for mankind: he thought men bore ſome reſemblance to the idea he had formed of them. He ſhewed an extreme fondneſs for children; it was ſo neceſſary for him to love, that

his heart abandoned itſelf to that paſſion whenever the object made no oppoſition. Why, therefore, was not he as happy in the gardens of Emmenonville as in the iſland of Saint Pierre? Was it in this place that he ended his life? Ah! ye who accuſed him of hypocriſy, of feigning wretchedneſs, what were your thoughts when you learned that he had himſelf put a period to his exiſtence *?

It

* The reader will perhaps be ſurpriſed that I ſhould look upon it as certain that Rouſſeau put an end to his life. But the Geneveſe, of whom I have ſpoken, received from him, a little time before his death, a letter which ſeemed to indicate ſuch a deſign. After the event, having taken infinite pains to gain ſome account of his laſt moments, he learned, that in the morning of the day on which Rouſſeau died, he roſe in perfect health, yet ſaid he was going to ſee the ſun for the laſt time, and drank, before he went out, ſome coffee which he himſelf had made. He returned in a few hours, and then began to be in extreme pain; but conſtantly forbade thoſe about him to ſend for any aſſiſtance, or give notice to any body of his ſituation. A few days previous to this melancholy moment, he had perceived

It is upon theſe terms that men, ſlow in pitying others, believe in their wretchedneſs. But what could inſpire Rouſſeau with ſo dreadful a deſign? This I am told was the conſequence of his certainty of having been deceived by the woman who was the only perſon in whom he had any confidence, and who had made herſelf neceſſary to him, by having detached him from all his connections. But it is alſo poſſible that long muſings may lead to deſpair. The firſt days of them are delicious; man feels his exiſtence, and enjoys his thoughts and ſentiments; but can he long contemplate his deſtiny without becoming melancholy? And, beſides,

the vile inclinations of his wife toward a man of the loweſt claſs. This diſcovery ſeemed to overwhelm him with affliction, and he remained eight hours together by the water-ſide in the moſt profound meditation. It ſeems to me, that if theſe particulars be added to his habitual melancholy, and the extreme increaſe of his terrors and diffidence, it is not poſſible to doubt, but that this great and unhappy man voluntarily terminated his exiſtence.

ſides, is the human mind ſufficiently robuſt to ſupport an inactive life, and habitual contemplation? Rouſſeau re-inforced by reflection all the ideas which afflicted him; and the look or geſture of a man whom he met, or a child who withdrew from him, became, in his imagination, new proofs of the univerſal hatred of which he believed himſelf to be the object; but, notwithſtanding this cruel diſtruſt, he remained until his death the beſt of men. He imagined that all by whom he was ſurrounded conſpired to do him harm; yet the thought of preventing or returning it never once entered his mind. He believed himſelf deſtined to ſuffer, and did not ſtruggle againſt his fate. I have ſeen men whom he had loved, but from whom he had withdrawn himſelf, affected by the remembrance of their connection with him, and have heard them accuſe themſelves of negligence which might have given Rouſſeau ſuſpicion. Theſe ſtill loved him

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in his injuſtice, and conſidered the kind of folly by which he was tormented as foreign to his nature, and a barrier which prevented their approaching him, but not from wiſhing to do it. Perſons of diſtruſtful nature, ſuch as they are ſeen in the world, learn to judge mankind according to what they themſelves are; they are afraid of their likeneſs in others; but Rouſſeau was diffident, becauſe he no longer expected happineſs; and having been ſo thoroughly convinced of the perfect goodneſs of men, yet afterwards forced to change his opinion, nothing appeared to him certain upon earth. He was miſtruſtful alſo, becauſe his ſublime reaſonings on the greateſt ſubjects did not prevent his being governed by an idea bordering upon folly; that of thinking he was deteſted by all mankind. They who ſay he muſt have had a deal of pride to believe himſelf the object of univerſal attention, I think are ſevere. How melancholy was that pride which induced

induced him to think there was not a being upon earth who had not conceived a hatred againſt him! Ah! why was not he fortunate enough to meet with an affectionate friend, whoſe whole care might have been that of making him happy and raiſing his fallen courage! This, in the end, would have gained his confidence: the ſentiment in which neither ſelf-love nor intereſt has any part is ſo pure, ſo true and tender, that each word is a proof of it; every action removes all doubt. Ah! Rouſſeau, how pleaſing an effort would it have been to have inſpired thee with a new attachment to life, to have accompanied thy ſteps in thy ſolitary walks, to have followed thy thoughts, and by degrees to have directed them to more cheering hopes! How ſeldom do we know how to conſole the unhappy, and how rarely it happens that we conſider the ſtate of their minds, and act accordingly! We oppoſe reaſon to their diſordered faculties,

and our calmneſs to their agitation; their confidence ſtops ſhort, and the grief they feel ſinks ſtill deeper into their hearts. Endeavour not to prove to them that they have real ſubjects of pain; offer to them rather ſome new means of happineſs; let them believe the misfortune they feel. Would you conſole them, by proving that the pain by which they are overwhelmed is not worthy of pity? If the loſs of an object paſſionately beloved was the cauſe of the melancholy of Rouſſeau, I ſhould not be ſorry that he died without conſolation, that an affectionate heart did not conſecrate itſelf to his wiſhes. To what words of hope and comfort can a perſon who has ſuffered ſuch a loſs be prevailed upon to liſten? What does he upon earth but wait for death? What expreſſions of tenderneſs can be addreſſed to him? All theſe were pronounced by another, and to another he in his turn made uſe of them; but they now change his grief into madneſs. What ſociety is to him

him equal to the remembrance he bears in his heart? Or, what enjoyments can he have without feeling the regret of taſting them alone? No, to this misfortune, when the heart feels the whole extent of it, nothing but death or Providence can afford conſolation. But Rouſſeau's deſpair was cauſed by a gloomy melancholy, that diſcouragement with which all men, unconnected with ſociety, whatever may be their deſtiny, may be ſeized. His mind was deſtroyed by injuſtice; he was terrified at being alone; at not having a heart near his own; at inceſſantly recoiling upon himſelf; at neither inſpiring nor feeling any intereſt; at being indifferent to fame, tired of his genius, tormented by the want he felt of loving, and the misfortune of not being beloved. In youth we ſeek after emotions, and love is neceſſary to us; but how affecting is this deſire of loving in the decline of life! To what a degree it proves a heart to be tender and good, which wants to open itſelf,

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which perſonality fatigues, and which wiſhes to quit its own boſom to live in that of another! Rouſſeau was alſo tormented by remorſe; without feeling that he was beloved, he could not believe he did not deſerve to be hated. The affectionate union of two perſons triumphs over ſo many fears! The judgment of God and man does not overtake us alone. Rouſſeau perhaps permitted himſelf to commit the crime of ſuicide without remorſe; he found himſelf ſo trifling an object in the immenſity of the univerſe. We occupy ſo ſmall a ſpace in our own eyes when we hold no place in a heart which ſurvives us, that it is poſſible for us to count our lives as nothing. And is the author of Julia dead for want of being beloved? One day in a gloomy foreſt he ſaid to himſelf, *I am alone upon the earth; I ſuffer, I am wretched, and my exiſtence is of no uſe to any perſon: I may die.* Can ye who have accuſed him of pride ſay that it was ſucceſs in which he failed? Had he not it in

his power to acquire this daily? But who would have partaken of it with him, or have ſet him the example of enjoying it? He had many admirers, but not one friend. At preſent a uſeleſs concern is mingled with the enthuſiaſm he inſpires. His works, full of virtue and the love of humanity, make him beloved now he is no longer in exiſtence; and yet whilſt he lived, calumny prevented his enjoying this happineſs; calumny triumphs until death, and this is all it deſires. How well does the enchanting place wherein his aſhes repoſe correſpond with the ſentiments the remembrance of him inſpires! Its melancholy aſpect gently prepares us for that contemplation of the heart which the homage we are going to render him requires. A pompous mauſoleum in marble has not been erected to his memory; but the gloomy, majeſtic and beautiful appearance of nature about his tomb, ſeems a new kind of monument which brings to our recollection the genius and character

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of Rouſſeau. His funeral urn is placed in an iſland; it is not unintentionally approached, and the religious ſentiment which induces the traveller to croſs the lake by which it is ſurrounded, proves him to be worthy of carrying thither his offering. I ſtrewed no flowers upon this melancholy tomb, but I contemplated it for a long time, my eyes ſuffuſed with tears; I quitted it in ſilence, and remained in the moſt profound meditation. Ye who are happy, come not to inſult his ſhade! Leave to wretchedneſs an aſylum to which the appearance of felicity does not purſue it. Strangers, who walk in theſe woods, are ſhewn the ſituations which Rouſſeau preferred, the places where he repoſed himſelf for a conſiderable time, and the inſcriptions from his works, eſpecially from Eloiſa, which he engraved upon trees or rocks. The peaſants of the village, by their praiſes of the gentleneſs and beneficence of poor Rouſſeau, join in the enthuſiaſm of travellers. *He was very*

melancholy, ſay they, *but he was very good*. In this abode which he inhabited, and which is now conſecrated to him, death is deprived of every thing remembrance can wreſt from its power; but the impreſſion of his loſs is thereby rendered more terrible. We almoſt ſee him, call to him, and the abyſs returns an anſwer. Ah! Rouſſeau, defender of the feeble, friend of the wretched, and the paſſionate lover of virtue; thou, who deſcribedſt all the emotions of the ſoul, and waſt affected by every kind of misfortune; worthy, in thy turn, of that ſentiment of compaſſion which thy heart ſo well knew how to feel and expreſs, may a voice worthy of thee be raiſed to defend thy memory! And ſince thy works cannot ſhelter thee from the ſhafts of calumny, and are inſufficient to thy juſtification; ſince there are found minds which ſtill reſiſt the ſentiments they inſpire for their author, let the ardour of praiſing thee animate at leaſt thoſe by whom thou art admired!

The tears of the wretched daily efface the ſimple inſcriptions which friendſhip has engraved upon the tomb of Rouſſeau. I requeſt that the gratitude of men whom he enlightened, of the men to promote whoſe happineſs his whole life was employed, may find an interpreter; let eloquence arm itſelf for him, and in its turn be uſeful to his memory. What great man would diſdain to inſure the fame of another great man? How agreeable would it be to ſee in every age that league of genius againſt envy! What a ſublime example would men of a ſuperior order, who ſhould take upon themſelves the defence of others of the ſame claſs by whom they had been preceded, give to their ſucceſſors! The monument they would raiſe would one day ſerve as the pedeſtal of their own ſtatue! If calumny dared to attack them alſo, they would previouſly have weakened its odious ſhafts by putting men upon their guard, and the juſtice of poſterity would

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diſcharge the debt of gratitude, due from the neglected ſhade whoſe fame they had protected.

Letter from the Counteſs Alexandre de Vaſſy to the Baroneſs de Stael, concerning the Book intitled, Letters on the Works and Character of J. J. Rouſſeau.

ROUSSEAU, at his death, madam, left to thoſe about him the remembrance of his virtues and the love of his fame. Theſe are the titles which give me a right to ſpeak of the letters you have written concerning him; this work, of a nature to be diſtinguiſhed, will ſtrongly excite and ſufficiently ſatisfy the curioſity of the public. Woe to that perſon, who after reading theſe letters does not feel for the author the ſentiment with which you are penetrated for Rouſſeau. But, madam, you have been deceived in having been told that *he put an end to his own exiſtence*; and this error, which from you comes with authority, may have conſequences ſo dangerous in their effects, ſo injurious to the memory of Rouſſeau, that

that I think I discharge a sacred duty in losing no time to correct it. A man like him belongs to the universe; his precepts persuade; and his examples, while they excite our admiration, almost force us to imitate them.

The death of Rousseau was so noble, affecting, and sublime; the sight of a great man struggling with agonies, gratefully receiving the friendly offices done him, and calmly seeing the arrival of the moment prescribed for his end, is so great a moral lesson; the example was so striking to me, for I was almost a witness of it, that I cannot without pain see Rousseau accused of an action which was far from his heart, and in contradiction to his principles.

No, madam, Rousseau did not voluntarily terminate his life; the detail you give of the circumstances which preceded his last moments, is not exact. Rousseau could have no knowledge of the infidelity of his wife, or at least of the

the perſon whom he permitted to bear his name; becauſe it was not until more than a year after his death, that her miſbehaviour was ſuch, as to make it impoſſible for her to remain any longer at Ermenonville.

The proofs I offer you, madam, are the account given by the ſurgeons, the evidence of my father, that of M. le Begue de Preſle, an intimate friend of Rouſſeau's, and who was at Ermenonville at that fatal moment; and finally the relation contained in the details of this unhappy event.

Your attachment to the memory of Rouſſeau renders you worthy of being informed of the truth; mine impoſes on me the law of publiſhing it. I make no apology for a letter which is ſufficiently juſtified by its motive.

I have the honor to be, MADAM,
Your very humble and obedient Servant,
DE GERARDIN,
COUNTESS ALEXANDRE de VASSY.

Anſwer from Madame de Stael to the above.

MADAM,

A GENEVESE, ſecretary to my father, and who paſſed a great part of his life with Rouſſeau; as alſo another perſon of the name of *Mouton*, a man of great wit, and to whom he confided his laſt thoughts, were my authors for what I have written. Some letters likewiſe which I had ſeen from him, written a little before his death, ſignify the deſign he had formed of putting an end to his life. Theſe circumſtances will excuſe my error, for ſuch I call the opinion you combat. I had thoughts of annexing your letter to thoſe I had written upon Rouſſeau, but ſome flattering expreſſions in it made me fear leſt I ſhould be ſuſpected of a deſire to publiſh your ſuffrage, rather than to juſtify Rouſſeau. In fact is it juſtifying him,

him, and will you ſeverely judge a fault which carries with it ſo great an excuſe; the misfortune which may have led to it? You, madam, who are ſurrounded by none but perſons who love you, cannot be acquainted with ſuch profound grief of mind; but you have a heart which muſt know how to conceive it and to pardon. I am therefore of opinion, that, if I have been deceived, I have done no injury to the memory of Rouſſeau. The work, beſides, which is known to my friends only, is not worthy of repairing it; this would be giving the letters an importance, which they neither have nor ever will have. Accept, madam, my thanks, and pardon me for not having rendered, as I could have wiſhed, the homage due to the great man whom you loved. Had I known he poſſeſſed that happineſs, I ſhould have been certain that he had not voluntarily quitted this life.

I have the honor to be, &c.

NECKER BARONESS DE STAEL.

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